

GRITLI'S CHILDREN

By the Author of "Heidi"



Johanna Spyri

GRITLI'S CHILDREN

A Story of Switzerland

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"Heidi," "Cornelli," "Mazli," "Vinzi," "Eveli,"
"Children of the Alps," etc.

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ALFRED O. HUTCHISON
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GRITLI'S CHILDREN

CHAPTER I

THE COUNTRY-HOUSE ON THE RHINE

IT WAS in the month of June and the brilliant sunshine gleamed on a beautiful stone house covered with pretty red climbing roses. Their fragrance, mixed with other delicate perfumes from the flower-garden, was wafted into the house by a fresh morning breeze. From a water basin in the middle a high fountain rose skyward and then fell splashing back again into the shining pool. Many-hued butterflies fluttered about in the bright sunshine and settled here and there on the gorgeous flowers, and numerous trees spread delightful shade over stone statues and hidden nooks. Here the birds twittered and sang, gaily rocking in the upper branches.

At a high window of the house a pale girl sat looking out into the radiant morning. But she could not drink in all the light and fragrance, because the window near which she sat was closed. She gazed out longingly over the gleam-

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ing flowers and the waves of the river beyond. At the end of the garden a terrace led down to the Rhine, which bathed the drooping branches of willow trees in its waters. From the window the child could see the leafy trees beside the river, but she could not see a stone bench in their cool shade. Here one could look straight down to the green water, arched over by a roof of branches, which dipped their ends in the sparkling surface and drifted on with the waves awhile. It was a delicious spot for dreaming away a sunny afternoon and watching the hurrying waves go by. The pale little girl seemed to know this retreat, for her longing eyes lingered there.

“Oh, mamma,” she said in a supplicating voice, “can’t I soon go into the garden? Couldn’t I go down to the bench on the Rhine now?”

The mother had led her sick child to this favorite spot near the window an hour ago and her anxious glances had never left the colorless little face, from which two large eyes looked so longingly into the sunny garden.

“Dear child,” she replied anxiously, “you know how tired you always get in the morning. We’ll wait till this afternoon. We might go down then. Won’t that suit you, child?”

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“ Ah, yes,” sighed the girl, looking out silently once more to the sun-bathed flowers and the lightly swaying tree-tops.

“ Oh, it is so beautiful outside! Can't we go now, mamma?” begged the child again after awhile. Her eyes followed the sparkling waves so passionately that the mother could not resist her and got up. At that moment an elderly woman entered the room. She looked so neat and spotless that one might have thought she had nothing to do except keep her beautiful gray hair with the snow-white cap above and her simple faultless dress in order. But on the contrary the woman had charge of the whole large household. She had barely entered the room, when mother and daughter cried out simultaneously: “ Oh, Clarissa, we were just wishing for you!” and both asked advice about a little walk in the garden, the child begging eagerly for her assent. Old Clarissa was a person from whom everybody in the house sought advice and help, from the mistress down to the young errand boy. Whoever looked into Clarissa's eyes felt confidence in her at once: she seemed so kind and motherly. “ Please let us go, Clarissa,” begged the sick girl once more.

“ I see no reason why we shouldn't try, dear

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Mrs. Stanhope," said Clarissa, turning to the mother. "The air is perfectly lovely and the birds fairly call us to come."

"We'll do it if you approve, Clarissa," assented Mrs. Stanhope. So Frederick, the butler of many years' standing, was called in to carry the little girl downstairs, and thus save her bit of strength which was so easily exhausted. Arrived outside, the two women took the child between them and led her through the sunny garden. On all the twigs gay birds twittered, the roses exhaled sweet perfume and whole flocks of bright-colored butterflies fluttered about in the mild air.

"Do you feel happy here, Nora?" asked the anxious mother.

"Oh, yes, it is so beautiful," replied the child, "but I'd just love to go to the stone bench and watch the waves where the branches hang into the water."

They went down the green terraces to the old linden trees. Here stood the stone bench, nearly hidden by drooping branches, whose leafy ends lightly swayed on the shimmering waters. The lindens were in blossom and filled the air with fragrance. Nora sat on the bench and quietly

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watched the dipping branches and the hurrying waves.

“ Oh, mamma, if only I could go away, too; but I am so tired all the time. I'd love to hop about as lightly as the birds and sing as they do in the linden trees. It is so lovely here, but I am always tired.”

“ You'll soon grow stronger, child,” consoled the mother. She looked, however, as if she herself needed the consolation which she was trying to give to her daughter. “ Today when the doctor comes we'll ask him what to do this summer to make you stronger. We must go back to the house now. What is the matter, Nora, you look so pale?”

Nora assured her that she was just tired. In fact after every exertion her already white face took on a deeper pallor. She only reached the house with effort, and when Frederick had carried her upstairs, she lay a long time motionless on the sofa.

Towards noon the doctor arrived. Upon the mother's detailed account of her daughter's constant loss of strength, he prescribed a complete change of air. After musing awhile he promised

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to write immediately to a colleague of his who lived in Switzerland and ask his advice, as the young patient must not be sent too high up into the mountains. As soon as he had an answer, he would let Mrs. Stanhope know. With this the doctor took his leave.

Towards evening Nora again sat in her easy chair by the window, wearily watching the evening sun throw golden strips across the lawn and shine upon the roses. Old Clarissa sat opposite Nora at her work-table and quite often raised her faithful eyes to the child.

“Clarissa,” said Nora now, “tell me the old song about Paradise again.

Clarissa laid down her work. “We’ll sing it together some day when you are stronger. I’ll say it now instead.” Folding her hands in her lap she began:

“There is a streamlet crystal-clear,
A meadow intersecting,
And clumps of lilies glittering near
Its waters, heaven-reflecting.

And fragrant roses deck the sward
By golden light caressed,
While bird-song from the trees is poured—
’Tis Paradise the blest!

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There ever soft the breezes blow
Through all the flowery ways,
As in a dream the people go
And on each other gaze.

In glad' astonishment men hail
Their fellows everyone,
For they have fled a gloomy vale
And reached eternal sun.

'Tis thus they dwell in Paradise,
No grief their souls annoy,
No tears can ever dim their eyes,
They live in purest joy."

When Clarissa had finished, everything was quiet for a little while. Nora seemed lost in thought.

"Clarissa," she said after a pause, "it is so beautiful and it makes me long to go."

"Yes, go joyfully, dear child, go joyfully," said Clarissa with tears in her eyes. "You'll be able to wander about among glowing flowers and you'll sing:

"'No tears can ever dim their eyes,
They live in purest joy.'

Both mamma and I will come before long."

At that moment the mother entered and Clarissa stopped abruptly, knowing that Mrs. Stanhope could not endure the thought of Nora's

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possible death. But having understood Clarissa's words, she grew more anxious still, and after looking at her pale, tired child, insisted upon having her taken to bed at once.

When late that evening Mrs. Stanhope was sitting alone with her old friend, she began to ask timidly what had led Clarissa to such a conversation with Nora. After all the child was not so ill one needed to fear the worst. Why then talk about it?

"Nora wanted to hear my old song," replied Clarissa. "And dear Mrs. Stanhope, just let me tell you something. Our dear, weak, lovely child won't ever be able to enjoy her life if none of all the wealth surrounding her can give her pleasure. She can't even enjoy a short walk through the beautiful garden without suffering pain. Shouldn't we wish her to return to a beautiful land where there is no sorrow and pain?"

"I can't bear to think of it, Clarissa! It must not be! Can't matters improve and Nora get new strength?" wailed the mother, and the thought stirred her so painfully that she could not say another word. She retired at once and old Clarissa also went to her room with a heavy heart. Soon the beautiful stone house lay quiet

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and dark in the midst of the glorious garden. The moon shone down from on high, and whoever saw the tall white pillars gleam through the dark trees thought to himself: "How wonderful to live in there!" for no one could see the sorrow which reigned in the mansion.

Mrs. Stanhope lived in her father's residence on the Rhine. She had been married to an Englishman when very young and had lost her husband after a few years. Then she had come back with her two little children—the lovely brown-eyed Philo and the delicate Nora with light curls—to her parents' mansion, which had been left lonely and forsaken. Both her parents had died and she had neither brothers nor sisters. Faithful Clarissa, her childhood nurse, had accompanied her everywhere and had helped her over all the difficulties of the strange country. She again stood at her mistress' side in the lonely house as loving mother and nurse to the children. Several years had passed in mingled joy and sorrow, for the children's frail health did not allow undisturbed gaiety. Two years since a deep shadow had fallen on the house when Philo had forever closed his merry brown eyes. He was buried down in the garden by the

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white roses near the lindens. Philo had been a year older than Nora, who was now in her eleventh year.

A little more than a week had passed before the doctor appeared again. He had received the wished-for information. His friend, who lived in a wooded healthful mountain region was going to find just the right place where Mrs. Stanhope and her daughter could spend the summer near him. He also advised Mrs. Stanhope to get ready for the trip at once, then to come to him and she would find everything ready for her reception.

In the following days all preparations for the journey were made. Clarissa was to stay behind in order to take care of the house, and the young chambermaid was to accompany the travellers. A week later Mrs. Stanhope sat in the carriage with her little daughter, starting on her trip to Switzerland. Over and over again faithful Clarissa wished them all God-speed and happiness. When the carriage rolled down the white road, Clarissa wiped away a few tears. With folded hands she came back to the quiet house, murmuring to herself:

“No tears can dim their eyes,
They live in purest joy.”

CHAPTER II

IN THE DOCTOR'S HOUSE

THE evening sun shone down on the delicate green leaves of the young vegetables, which were the great joy of the doctor's wife. They filled two large beds beside the flower garden. When she walked happily up and down between the fragrant flowers of the garden she always at the end looked with great interest at the green plants which she had sown, fostered, and cared for all herself. The cauliflowers promised great success, and the owner looked with satisfaction at her young plants, which stood fresh and untouched. Not a sign could be seen of the destructive, greedy caterpillar.

"Good evening, Mrs. Keller," sounded a voice from the road, across a hedge. "You always have the best vegetables, and they show the care you give them."

The doctor's wife had stepped to the hedge over which Hiri, the workman, stretched out his calloused hand. Being an old friend, he could

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well expect a good handshake. He had gone to school with the doctor's wife and many a time had come to her for counsel and advice.

She answered his greeting in a friendly way and then asked, full of sympathy, "And how are things going, Hiri? Have you lots of work? Are your wife and children well?"

"Yes, yes, thank God!" replied Hiri, dropping the heavy tools he had been carrying on his back. "There is always plenty of work and I am still on my way to the forge with these things. But I need a lot to do, for my household is growing."

"Your three boys look well. I saw them again with Elсли yesterday," she continued sympathetically. "But poor little Elсли looks frail and thin. Don't forget what her mother died of, Hiri. She must not exert herself too much, especially now when she is growing fast. You must look out in time, Hiri, this time. You know how quickly a young life can come to an end."

"Yes, yes, indeed! I'll never forget it. I couldn't bear it when they put poor Gritli under the ground. She was so very young. Margaret is a good and able woman, but I can never forget my Gritli." Here Hiri wiped a few tears away.

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Tears had also risen in the kind woman's eyes. "I don't forget it, either. How Gritli would have loved to remain with you and her two little children! She went so dreadfully fast. She had always looked thin and weak and I can never see her little Elсли without worrying. I am afraid she has too much to do. One can easily see that she can't stand much."

"Yes, she is slight and thin," assented Hiri, "but otherwise she takes after me. She is not very quick and rather thoughtful. But the boy is a lot like Gritli. He always has things in his head and doesn't like to sit still very long. He hates the little boys to be dirty, and tells them to stand under the pump. He is just as particular as Gritli used to be and hates dirt and disorder. Then of course the little ones shriek and cry for their mother and then there is a lot of noise. I never come home in the evening that Margaret does not tell me I must give my big boy a beating because he teased the little ones. But when the boy stands in front of me and looks me straight in the eyes as Gritli did, I can never do it. That makes Margaret angry and sharp words follow. I am sorry, too, then, because Margaret is otherwise a good and able woman. I have

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thought sometimes that you might say a word to her about this, Mrs. Keller. I'd be so grateful! She might listen to you, because you have boys to bring up, too, and know what to do with them. Won't you please say a word to her when she passes sometime?"

"Yes, I'll do it gladly. And how is it with Elсли? Is Margaret good to her?"

"Well, you see it is this way," said Hiri, coming still nearer to the hedge. "The child is more like me and gives way easily. She is not set in her ideas the way Gritli was and is not obstinate at all. She does whatever Margaret tells her, never says no all day and never complains. From when she comes home from school till she goes to bed she has to help everywhere, watch the boys and carry the little one around."

"Don't let her do too much, Hiri," warned the anxious woman. "I really am concerned about the child. You had better send Margaret here soon. I might say a few words about it. Tell her I have a few clothes for her that my children have outgrown."

"I'll tell her gladly and now I think I'd better move on. Sleep well, Mrs. Keller, and take

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no offence, please. I hope your garden will do nicely."

"Thank you. Good-night, Hiri!" Once more there was a handshake across the hedge, then Hiri went down the road.

The doctor's wife still stood between her beds, her thoughts busy with something else. Her conversation with Hiri had brought back recollections of former days. She saw before her Gritli, a gay child with large brown eyes. This little girl with two clever hands fastened one bunch of forget-me-nots in her skirt and another in her hair. How well it looked! She and the child were sitting together near the stream where they had just picked quantities of the blue forget-me-nots and were tying them in bunches. Though Gritli was the child of poor parents, she always looked unusually neat and pretty and her hair was well combed. Also she had here or there either a flower or a little ribbon pinned on for ornament, making her look as if she were going to a feast, despite her plain clothes. Many scolded Gritli for that and others laughed at her, but she did not change. Gritli had a deep-seated longing for the beautiful and she went about ever thus adorned, despite what people said. One

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might have thought a painter had just decorated her in order to paint a portrait of her. At eighteen she married the good-natured Hiri, who had always wanted Gritli for his wife and had often told her that he would work for two if only she became his. After five years the delicate girl was taken with consumption. Her two children, the four-year-old Stephen and the three-year-old Elсли had been kept so neat and tidy from the first by their young mother that it had become a habit. As, later, Hiri needed a mother for his two little children, people told him to take Margaret, who could help him well with the work. So Margaret became his wife and was a splendid worker. But she had no time for adornment and flowers and saw no particular point in neatness. She considered these things a loss of time, and Hiri's household took on quite a different character from then on. The three small boys and the little one in the cradle did not a bit resemble Fani and Elсли.

From these thoughts which had risen in the woman's mind she was roused by a frightful noise coming from the house. Shrieking loudly, Riki, a girl about eight years old, flew toward her followed by her brother Fred, who carried a big

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book under his left arm and was stretching out his right fist.

“Riki, don't be so violent,” urged the mother. “Come, control yourself. What has happened?”

Riki kept on shrieking and buried her head in her mother's dress.

“Just look, mother! Why does this unreasonable creature go on like that?” cried Fred, running up to her. “Look! I caught this dear little frog and held it under Riki's eyes for her to admire it. I'll read you right away what an extraordinary animal it is. Just look!” With this Fred opened his hand, where a green frog sat staring.

“Riki, be quiet! That is enough now,” commanded the mother. “And you know well enough, Fred, that the child is unreasonably afraid of your little animals. Why do you need to hold it right under her eyes then?”

“Oh, she happened to stand near me,” explained Fred. “And listen to this interesting description, mamma!” The boy had opened the book and read: “‘The green water-frog, *esculenta*, is three inches long, grass green in color with black spots. His eyes are golden and the toes of his hind legs are webbed. His voice,

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which is heard particularly loudly on summer nights, sounds like Brekekekex! He spends his winter in the scum. His nourishment is—' ”

At that instant a carriage drove up.

“ It is the lady with the sick child. Let me go, Fred, let me go! ” said the mother, hurriedly pushing Fred aside. But he ran after her: “ Mamma, listen! You didn't hear about his nourishment yet; his nourishment is——”

The carriage had now stopped. Hans came from the stable and Kathy came out of the kitchen with a clean white apron on. She had to carry the sick child upstairs. Fred and Riki, moving back a little, stood motionless near the hedge, watching intently. First a lady stepped from the carriage, at once motioning to Kathy. Then the latter lifted a delicate, nearly transparent figure from the carriage and carried her upstairs. The two women followed.

“ The child is much bigger than you. Mamma thought she was only eight or nine years old, ” Fred explained to Riki. “ She'll be Emmi's friend and one can see right away how much she'll hate the kind of noise you always make. ”

“ Yes, yes, but she hasn't always spiders and frogs and caterpillars in her apron like you, ”

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Riki argued, ready to add more excuses for her shrieks. Fred opened his hand just then to inspect his frog again, when the creature, with a big leap, jumped straight towards Riki. With shrill cries the child rushed into the house, but found herself quickly stopped here, for Kathy shot towards her saying indignantly, "Hush! hush! Is that the way to behave when there's a sick person in the house?"

"Where is aunty?" asked Riki now, a question Kathy answered almost before it was spoken. Many hundred times this question was asked in the household.

"In there, but don't go into the other room because the sick girl is there. Your mamma has forbidden it. You aren't allowed to shriek, either, as if you were a pig ready to be killed," added Kathy.

Riki hastened away in order to tell her aunt the story of the frog. She couldn't get over the fact that the creature had nearly jumped into her face. But the aunt was occupied with Oscar, her eldest brother. They were having a serious consultation.

"Do you know what, aunty? If Feklitus won't give way, we might put both sentences

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together. Then we'd both have our own. Don't you think so?"

"Yes, one could," assented the aunt. "In that way both parties would be satisfied. Both verses are nice and thoughtful, as they should be for such an occasion."

"Won't you help Emmi embroider it, aunty?" begged Oscar. "You know she'll never finish the flag herself. She is always running off and forgetting about it."

When the aunt promised her assistance, Oscar jumped up, eager to tell his comrades of the new decision and his aunt's promise. But before Riki had a chance to speak, Emmi rushed into the room, shouting excitedly, "Aunty, a whole crowd is going off to pick strawberries; can I go too? Please say yes quickly, because I am in a hurry. I can't go to mamma now."

"Once it's violets, then strawberries, then blueberries, always something, Emmi. All right, you can go, but don't come home too late."

Emmi was already outside.

"I, too, I, too!" cried Riki, hurrying after her sister, who had leaped down the stairs two steps at a time.

"No, no, you can't go to the woods where

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there are lots of bugs and red snails," she called back.

Riki, quickly turning about, decided to tell her frog story at last as consolation. But Fred had come in with his book meanwhile and had settled as close as possible to his aunt. Opening his book he began—

"I am glad you are here, aunty. Mamma couldn't hear it all and I have caught a wonderful specimen. But you must have one, too, and I'll try to catch it for you tomorrow and bring it to you."

"No, no!" shrieked Riki; "say no, aunty. It nearly jumps into your face and has yellow eyes like a dragon and —"

Fred, making a fist of his empty hand, held it before Riki's eyes, then quickly opened it. With a leap Riki jumped up and out by the door. "So now one can read quietly at last," said Fred exultantly. Laying his hand on the book he began, "The green water-frog, *esculenta*—"

That moment a door opened beyond and steps and voices could be heard.

"Come," said the aunt, "let's watch the sick girl drive away. We can come back to the frog afterwards." As she stepped to the window and

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watched the little girl being lifted into the carriage, her face looked very sad.

“How pale and sick she looks! The poor, pretty little girl! No, the poor mother,” she corrected herself when her glance fell on the weeping lady who was shaking hands with the doctor's wife. “Oh, dear me!” the aunt sighed once more, as the carriage rolled away.

Fred had taken up the book again, but the story of the frog had to be put aside once more because the mother came into the room quite agitated from her recent experience. She always told her sister everything that happened, for the aunt belonged entirely to the household and had taken part for years in the family's welfare. The children could not have imagined the house without her and found her just as essential as their parents. Fred quickly received his aunt's promise to hear all about the frog just before their bedtime: then he followed his mother's request to go outside. The mother now told about Mrs. Stanhope and her little daughter. The frail little creature with the large blue eyes and colorless face really seemed only half to belong to earth. Apparently Mrs. Stanhope could not endure this thought and at the mother's first

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words of sympathy she had burst into bitter tears. She found great comfort in the thought that Nora only looked so pale and transparent on account of the tiresome journey. She had firm hope that her health would soon return in this strengthening mountain air.

The mother got no further, for she heard a horse's hoofs on the gravel: this meant her husband's return from his visits as a doctor. Immediately going to meet him, she told him of the strangers' arrival. He set right out again to pay his first visit to the new patient. He had secured a dwelling corresponding as far as possible with the wishes of his friend on the Rhine. He returned late when the children had already gone to bed. Fred had really succeeded in reading his paragraph aloud by following his aunt wherever she went for the last half hour. It was always difficult to find a suitable moment, because all his brothers and sisters seemed to need her at the same time, not to speak of Kathy and the mother. But Fred was persevering and could go to bed contented at last, for the interesting description of the water-frog was read.

The doctor sat down to his supper while his wife and the aunt sat beside him, eager to receive

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news of the young patient. To their question if he thought the change would make her well he sadly shook his head. "There is little hope," he said. "There is a complete lack of strength in the young creature. We'll be able to see if our mountain air can perform miracles. Nothing short of that can do any good."

It made the women very sad to hear this, for they had both seen how much the woman would suffer if the child should die. Therefore they clutched the hope that the strengthening air would have a good influence on the child.

"Emmi must go to see the little girl and try to cheer her up," began the doctor again. "She has enough energy and can get rid of some of it without getting everybody into mischief. She'll astonish the sick girl and won't be able to start her on anything new. It will be nice for both if she goes there quite often."

The mother agreed. She also liked the thought of a friendship which might prove beneficial to both children. Gentle, frail Nora might have a calming influence on Emmi's rash, violent nature, while Emmi again might entertain the patient with her amusing, lively ways.

Later on, when the doctor was busy with

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preparations for the morrow, the mother and aunt sat together at a hamper containing torn clothes. They reviewed the day and told each other their experiences with the children. It was the only time of the day the sisters found for the quiet conversation they both craved: there were so many affairs and observations to be discussed concerning the children's welfare and development. All the sick people of the neighborhood came also to the house, sure of finding there warm sympathy and help for their troubles. Both had so much to talk over that the heap of torn stockings melted down quite fast under their industrious fingers, and at last they could calmly enjoy a rather late and well-earned rest.

CHAPTER III

SCHOOL AND VILLAGE

THE village of Buchberg consisted of many scattered farms and large and small groups of houses which peeped out from among the leafy fruit trees. A few buildings, including the school-house, the churchwarden's and the community president's dwelling, were near the church, while the doctor's residence stood a little apart on a wooded height. All the larger dwellings were along the road, among others the huge factory, with the owner's large house, which he had built himself, beside it. Between it and the road lay a sunny garden completely devoid of trees and bushes in order not to hide the handsome building from the passers-by. Mr. Bickel, the proprietor of this fine place, lived with his wife and son in only the lower rooms of the gorgeous mansion. Six enormous, splendid apartments upstairs were always tightly closed with green shining shutters. Nobody ever entered there except Mrs. Bickel on rare occasions to wipe away the dust from the gorgeous

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furniture and solemnly to admire it. At such times the little son might be allowed to go in with her, but only after having taken off his shoes outside. He stood there in the dim light, admiring the unused chairs and tables with religious awe. ✓ Mr. Bickel was a much respected man in the community, for he employed many boys and workmen in his factory, but it must be said that he made use of everyone and was so eager at his work that he only judged people by their possible value in his works. Even when a child was born in the village, he immediately reckoned what year he would enter the ranks of his workmen. Nearly all the children knew that they would come some day under his rule and therefore stepped respectfully aside when they met him. Mr. Bickel carried a thick cane with a large gold knob and a brightly gleaming watchchain, from which hung an enormous dangling seal.

Every morning Feklitus, Mr. Bickel's only son, wandered down the road towards the school. He carried a leather school-bag on his back, decorated with his initials F. B., surrounded by an embroidered wreath of roses. It had been a Christmas present from his mother. The boy had come by his very odd name in the following man-

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ner: His grandfather having been a very poor tailor, socially much below his father's present position, was far from prosperous and small of stature besides. He had always been called "the little tailor." When he gave his son the name of Felix it was turned into Fekli and to mark him still further they called him Tailor-Fekli. The boy, who guessed early in life what importance he would finally achieve, took a greater dislike to the name the richer and more distinguished he became. But the Buchberg people, who were used to the name, would not give it up, and it was passed on from mouth to mouth up to the present time. Whenever they met Mr. Bickel they said, "Good day, Mr. Bickel," but behind his back no one spoke of him otherwise than Tailor-Fekli. Mr. Bickel, realizing this, was very sensitive about the matter. When he had become a great man and lived with Mrs. Bickel in the beautiful new house and a son was born to him, he pondered long about his little one's name. He sought and sought but still did not find a name which expressed his son's position and prosperity and at the same time would kill the vicious nickname. Just at that time Mr. Bickel had to attend an examination as a school inspector. Beaming with

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joy Mr. Bickel came home that day. "The name is found, the christening can take place," he said to his wife. And it did. The boy was called Fortunatus, a name which completely expressed his high prospects. Mr. Bickel was quite sure that the old name would be rooted out now, but as soon as his little son entered school the name proved too long for the children. An abbreviated "Tus" and later on an expressive "Tailor-Fekli-Tus" was changed in time to "Fekli-Tus." This name stuck to the boy and was considered by many in the village to be the lad's real name. Feklitus seemed natural enough for that family.

Feklitus sat with Oscar on the bench of the sixth class, or rather they sat on two benches in the same class. When six years ago they had both entered the school together, Oscar had placed himself at once at the head of his class, for he loved to rule. But Feklitus, who had come to school in the full consciousness of his importance, had said, "This is my place." His father had plainly told him he was to be on top.

But the teacher, being an impartial man and sifting the matter, found Oscar to be two days Feklitus' senior. Oscar therefore remained at the head. Feklitus, however, not willing to take

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the second place, sat down as first on the second bench, and as the class was big enough to fill both benches, the teacher had left him there. This state of affairs had never changed from the beginning and the number of pupils had remained the same. Oscar was perfectly satisfied with gay Fani, Hiri's son, for a neighbor, as he was ever willing to enter into Oscar's most daring plans. His neighbor's looks also appealed to him much more than those of the broad-shouldered Feklitus, who was always squeezed into a very fine cloth suit with a high collar. His neck being by nature short, it was completely swallowed up in this way, and Feklitus looked as if he were fastened in a tight case, unable even to move. Fani was slight and as agile as a lizard and all summer long wore nothing but his shirt and leather breeches, but he was so pleasant and obliging that everyone forgot how scantily he was clad. When he pushed his long dark hair, which no one ever cut, back from his forehead, and gazed about with his large gleaming eyes, Oscar felt immediately inspired to an exciting enterprise, such as the founding of some new imposing society or union. Fani could be used for many parts; he could represent an artist, a robber chief, or even an actor. This

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fired the imagination of Oscar, who loved nothing better than organizing societies. As soon as anything like that was started he found himself overloaded with work, and Fani was just the right man to carry on his plans, useful everywhere, and besides being willing and understanding as no second boy in the whole class. Feklitus, on the contrary, always hindered, in that he never took part unless a major part was assigned to him which would make him seem an originator of the plan as well as Oscar. Feklitus was needed because otherwise his whole party dropped out of the plan along with him. The class was strictly divided into two equal parties; yes, not only one class but all the classes in the school. All were separated into Oscarians and Feklitusians. Oscar had gathered around him the independent boys, well-to-do farmers' and workmen's sons who meant to follow in their fathers' footsteps, also every one who had a special career in mind from drivers up to possible school-teachers. All the others were adherents of Feklitus, and the many undecided ones were brought under his flag by the words, "Just wait till you come to the factory!" He used this threat whenever a boy could not decide which side to join. Many came to him

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that way who otherwise would not have held with him at all. The less one knew what would happen to those destined for the factory, the more gruesome the dark threat sounded. But Fani cared not a whit for such uncertain threats. Of course he would go into the factory as soon as next Easter, when his school years were over. Just the same he stuck to Oscar and whenever Feklitus called out angrily, "Just wait till you come to the factory!" Fani turned about laughingly and called back, "Oh, yes, I'll wait! I am in no wild hurry!" For this Feklitus hated Fani and resolved to make as many difficulties as he could for him when he began to work there. But the parties mostly lived in peace, inasmuch as Oscar was anxious to keep Feklitus in a good humor, because he always needed many people for the success of his plans. Just now great concord reigned, because Oscar had organized a new singing club. Everybody who wished could take part in it, and preparations were to be made at once for the song festival to take place for the society's inauguration. Oscar had won over Feklitus by naming him one of the chief organizers. They had been promised an embroidered flag not only

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by Emmi but by the aunt, and Fani was to be flag-carrier. Today Oscar told the boys just before they left the classroom that a meeting was to take place. Outside, the youngsters immediately formed a close group and Oscar told the listeners that no motto had been settled on yet, but that he knew one suitable for the occasion.

“ Singing makes man joyful and makes life beautiful.”

Feklitus, however, did not approve of this. At such festivals he had often heard much better mottoes than that, he said, and he knew one they would like better:

“ Long life to our native land, where freedom lives forever!”

Oscar was not slow in remarking that this fitted another occasion, not this one. But Feklitus stuck to his opinion and asked the help of all his adherents. The result was a noisy tumult and the Oscarians and Feklitusians all shrieked wildly together. Oscar at last seized Feklitus's arm and pulled him aside from the noisy crowd and said indignantly, “ It is mean of you to start all this fuss, you trouble-maker! What do you ever gain by it? Nothing! And what do you spoil? Every-

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thing. But in order that you can see I'm not like you, I'll make you a proposition. We'll use both our mottoes. They sound quite well together. It will be like this:

“ ‘ Song makes life beautiful,
As all can understand.
Three cheers for freedom
And our dear native land.”

Feklitus, who had made up his mind not to give up the nice motto he had himself remembered, was satisfied. The others were informed of the decision and the meeting was over. All at once the whole gay crowd broke up in leaps and bounds. Only Oscar went home silent and with a frown on his forehead. He was angry with Fani, who had slipped away immediately after school instead of attending the meeting. Fani took everything much too lightly and turned too quickly from one plan to another. Oscar knew quite well that his sister Emmi was usually responsible for leading Fani into mischief and he was furious that Fani was always willing to do her bidding. She must have led him off somewhere tonight, he was quite sure. Upon reaching home he saw Fred kneeling in the vegetable garden, digging in the earth like a treasure-seeker.

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“Where is Emmi?” cried Oscar angrily.
“But don’t you touch me.”

“I am digging for a bug and have no interest in you at all,” was the prompt answer. “I don’t know where Emmi is. But I know one thing, and that is that either you or Emmi has taken every bit of paper in the house. It is impossible to do our lessons, however much we want to.”

“I didn’t take any,” declared Oscar. “I know that she has been mischievous before. She took the paper, of course, and we’ll see what more she’ll do if some one doesn’t stop her.” With this prophecy Oscar went into the house,

CHAPTER IV

MORE ABOUT BUCHBERG

OSCAR had guessed rightly. Fani had been one of the first to slip out through the open school door and Emmi, who was already outside, immediately took him aside: "Come quickly, Fani. I know a splendid tree you can draw. I have paper and everything."

Fani joyfully ran off with her, first down the road and then towards the green hill, where a narrow path led up through flowering meadows. Here they had to slow down and Emmi told her companion what she wanted. That morning the two higher classes had had drawing class together. Emmi, Elslie and the studious Fred, who was really too young for that grade, were in the fifth class. The teacher had had to promote him and he was even now one of the best in the fifth grade. But this was not so in drawing, where Fani was so superior to everybody else that the teacher looking at his drawings, often said, "Just look how well you can do when you want to, Fani! You could be better in other things, too, if you tried harder and were not so careless

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and indifferent." Today the teacher had remarked that he would like the children to draw something from nature, either a tree or flower, and had asked Fani to choose some lovely tree. That suited Emmi exactly. She had always loved Fani's drawings, and he had made some for her before of roses, strawberries, and also of a fisherman sitting under a tree near the water. These little pictures made splendid book-marks. Emmi had immediately wondered what tree he might draw and had thought of the large oak, which looked very beautiful just now. She had been there recently with her mother and the strange lady from the Rhine. The children reached the hill, called Oak Ridge on account of the lovely trees there: it stood on the very edge of the incline and threw its shadow far over the short, grassy pasture. Fani looked up into the rich foliage.

"Oh, how beautiful!" he said. "I am glad you thought of it, Emmi. It's wonderful for drawing. I'll start right away, but I must get away from it a little." Fani retreated step by step till he found the right spot. Here he sat down with Emmi beside him, and she took from her school-bag a considerable quantity of pencils and paper.

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"Oh, I can draw a lot with so much paper and so many pencils," said Fani, looking at them.

"I'll give you some to take home, too," promised Emmi. "I thought you might need a lot perhaps for changing it or making a second start. Here, choose a pencil."

This Fani did joyfully. It seemed the highest bliss to him to have a lot of material and to be able to draw as much as he wanted. He looked at it with great satisfaction once more, then settled down to work. Emmi quietly watched him.

"Oh, it looks like the oak already! What nice branches and dear little leaves you can make," said Emmi delighted. "I am sure you never drew a better tree. You'll see what the teacher will say when he sees it. You have made the best drawing of anybody, I am sure. How do you do it, Fani? I could never draw like that."

"I only copy what I see," said Fani, whose glowing, eager eyes constantly went to and fro from the paper to the tree. "Just look at the wonderful leaves! I really think no leaf is as beautiful as the oak leaf. Just look on top how beautifully it arches, just as if the branches were made specially to look as wonderful as possible. If only I could sit here all day and do nothing

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but draw this tree! There is nothing more wonderful in the whole world.”

“I know what!” exclaimed Emmi suddenly, “you must become a painter. That is the way people always feel when they want to become one. I know that for certain: otherwise you wouldn’t say that it was wonderful to sit all day before a tree and draw. Everybody else would find it frightfully tiresome.”

“It’s easy to say I must become a painter,” replied Fani with a sigh. “Next spring I leave school and have to go into the factory. That will mean winding thread from morning till night. I’d like to know what chance I’d have then to become a painter?”

“But wouldn’t you do anything in the world to become one, Fani? Just think how wonderful it would be. You said yourself it was the best thing in the whole world. Wouldn’t you risk everything for that?”

“Surely, but there is nothing to risk. What could I do?”

“Just wait, Fani. I’ll think out something you could do. If you really became a clever painter and had nothing to do but to draw and

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paint you'd have nothing but fun all your life. Don't you think so, Fani?"

Emmi had been so inspired by these imaginings that she set Fani all aflame. His pencil dropped from his hand and his eyes stopped examining the branches. They wandered to and fro as if looking for something he could not see.

"Do you really think, Emmi, it could ever be?" he asked greatly excited. "What do you think I might do? I'd like to do it right now. But what? But what?"

"I don't know yet but I'll think of something. You must wait a bit; maybe I can tell you in school tomorrow. But come, finish your tree now and I'll let you keep the pencils and paper so you can draw some more. The drawings will be shown at examination time and it is too bad that you only have ugly gray paper. Your drawings are always the best, you know."

Fani was overjoyed. He had often longed to draw at home but nothing could be found there for the purpose: the gift proved a real treasure. He settled back to work again, while Emmi was filled with admiration. Meanwhile the sun had set and twilight creeping down reminded the children that it was time to go home.

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Fred had finished his search for bugs some time ago and was standing on the watch for Emmi outside the hedge. After all, she must come sometime and face his questions. Oscar was much more excited than Fred and ran about inside with the same purpose, for he had looked for Fani all evening in vain. The boy had completely disappeared, no one knew where. There were so many things to consult about before the festival, and Feklitus was no good, because he was slow of comprehension and never had a single idea. Fani was a quite different and most resourceful ally. Emmi must have led him off somewhere to start some mischief as usual. He was firmly resolved, though, to find out what she had done and prevent her further plans, if possible: she had no right to keep Fani entirely to herself. These thoughts increased Oscar's agitation as he walked up and down with great strides. The watchful Fred now saw someone coming up the road. That couldn't be Emmi, though. It was too broad a figure, nearly taking up the width of the street. It was higher in the middle than at the sides. Fred wondered what it was. Could it be a strange curiosity of nature? Fred ran towards it and recognized Elsli, with four-year-old Rudi hanging to her

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skirts on one side and three-year-old Hiri on the other. On her arm sat the two-year-old Hans, with a big head and fat little arms and legs. The girl breathed heavily, for they were a considerable weight.

"Put that fat boy down, he nearly chokes you," said Fred disapprovingly, watching the boy's efforts to throw Elсли down.

"I can't! He always gets mad then and begins to cry," retorted Elсли, out of breath, dragging herself up the hill.

"Are you coming to us?" asked Fred, following.

"Yes, I have to fetch something," said Elсли, raising her arm, on which hung a large bag.

"You can't carry any more. Put that fat boy on the ground. He nearly pulls you down," said Fred, disgusted.

They had arrived near the house.

"Yes, I'll have to, at least till my arm doesn't ache any more." With these words little Hans was set down. At that moment, however, he broke into such violent shrieks that the mother, aunt, and Kathy as well dashed outside.

"I'd teach you," said the latter with a swinging motion of her hand. Then she retired. Elсли

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in fright had immediately lifted the boy again, but he still kept crying over the wrong done him.

“Mamma, tell that cry-baby to stand on the floor. He nearly crushes Elсли,” exclaimed Fred furiously.

This speech only irritated Hans the more, and when he pressed his head heavily on Elсли’s shoulder, she could barely stand up.

“You can put him down, Elсли; he must learn to stand by himself,” said the mother. But it proved a hard task. The small boy clung to Elсли’s neck and kicked with his legs. When at last he was made to stand, he set up such yells and tore so at Elсли’s clothes that she quickly picked him up, resigned to her fate. “He doesn’t want to, and gets cross the moment I put him down, and as soon as I come home from school I have to lift him. Otherwise he goes on like that.”

“But Hans is two years old and very heavy. He should be able to walk by now,” said the mother, displeased with the small tyrant. I suppose you have to carry the baby, too. How do you manage that, Elсли?”

“Hans gets dreadfully cross when I take the baby. He kicks and shrieks till mother hears

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him. Then she tells me angrily to stop the noise and all I can do is to put down the baby and pick up Hans. I rock the cradle till the little one stops and goes to sleep."

"Come in a moment, Elсли, you look so tired," said the mother sympathetically. "And Hans, you stand up and walk in yourself. You are perfectly able to do it. There is an apple inside and a nice piece of bread if you come."

"But if you won't," added the aunt, "we'll leave you out here. Rudi and Hiri, you can come in and get yours without half pulling Elсли down."

The two ran after the aunt, and small obstinate Hans had also understood the meaning of this speech. He kept still this time when Elсли let him slide down and toddled in without a murmur, holding on to his sister's hand. Fred marched behind, swinging a willow twig for a sign that there were many means of bringing round vicious little boys. All of them opened their eyes wide when the mother went to the cupboard and cut a huge piece of bread for each one. On top she laid a beautiful red apple, which had probably been meant for her own children. All three lads as well as Elсли were invited to take

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them, and Fred said, "Come, taste it." The boys began at once and bit into theirs so eagerly that it gave the spectators pleasure to see it. Elсли, showing the bag, said that her mother had sent her to get some clothes the doctor's wife had promised."

"No, child, I won't allow it," said the latter firmly. "You couldn't carry a pack of clothes besides. Tell your mother to come herself, for I have several things to tell her."

"Elsli, doesn't the apple tempt you? Won't you eat a piece of bread?" asked the aunt, observing that Elсли had put the apple in her pocket and had not touched the bread.

Elsli, blushing as if she had been caught at a wrong, said timidly: "I want to divide it with Fani, for he won't get any supper today."

"You can say that without being ashamed! But why doesn't he get anything?"

"We have had supper and Fani wasn't home yet. He's done it before and then all the sour milk and the potatoes are eaten up, because there never are very many. Father says, 'Who doesn't come isn't hungry.' But Fani is hungry, I know. Only he forgets that it's time."

"But where is he? Doesn't he have to help

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you care for the boys in the evening?" inquired the aunt.

"No, no, he can't do it. Mother always says they are much worse if he's with them and she lets him run off. That's the way he loses his supper sometimes and I can't save him any: I'd like to, because he is always so good to me. When he comes home, he does my lessons for me, because I can't. I am busy till mother takes the light and goes to bed."

"But Fani only loses his supper through pure carelessness. He could have it if he came. But you can't profit much from work you don't do yourself, Elslis," said the aunt.

Elsli blushed very deeply and her gentle blue eyes filled with tears.

"Yes, I know," she stuttered. "That's why I am so stupid in school. I am the worst of all in the class."

"No, you aren't," Fred objected chivalrously. "You don't know the lessons we have to learn by heart and read at home, but I know why, now. And if anybody ever laughs at you I'll show them with whom they have to deal."

Elsli had so much on her shoulders and so

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many worries that she never looked happy like other children. She gazed up gratefully at Fred, but no real merriness showed in her features. Upon getting up and taking her burden again—for Hans had given her clearly to understand that he wished to be picked up—she looked so weary that it worried the two women. They gazed after her as she dragged herself downstairs and across the garden, both Rudi and Hiri clinging to her side and the heavy Hans lying on her neck.

“If only some ray of sunshine would brighten the poor child’s existence!” sighed the mother, and the aunt was on the point of assenting sympathetically when an extraordinary noise approached the house. Emmi had been met by both her brothers, who now bombarded her with questions, each one louder than the last. “Why did you take Fani off?” “What did you do with all the paper?” “Where have you been again?” “No one can do their lessons, and it is all your fault.” “Tell us where you took him? He didn’t even keep his promise to come to the meeting.” “Tell us where the paper is, so we can do our work.”

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All three had come to the doorstep now. As the mother had been called away, the aunt met them.

“Be quiet and don't make such a noise, boys, Emmi can't possibly answer if you both shriek at her at once.”

Emmi flew to the aunt's protection, whispering into her ear what she had done with the paper. “Oh, aunty, help me, please! or Oscar will make a worse fuss still.”

The aunt, not finding the matter criminal, declared she would get some paper. Everyone was to come and begin work at once in silence. To enforce her command she added: “Papa will be home very soon; you know he won't allow such noise.” That had a quieting effect. All came in and soon the four children sat industriously working round the table. The aunt had furnished more paper and had declared to Oscar that Fani had only disappeared to do a task for school. Apparently the evening was to close in peace and quiet. Suddenly, though, Riki began to shriek again, and throwing back her chair, flew from the room down the corridor as if a monster were pursuing her.

Everyone raised his head.

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“Look at it!” said Emmi, pointing to the table, where a green, shiny bug wandered gravely across the white paper. It had escaped from the pocket of the eager young collector.

“But Fred, one doesn’t carry live bugs in one’s pockets,” scolded the mother. “You have receptacles for them. Just think a moment how disagreeable it is, not only for your neighbors, but also for the poor little creatures.”

“Fred has always been a wandering menagerie-bug himself. No decent person can ever come near him,” remarked Oscar.

“Yes, but my collections don’t always blow up the way your societies do,” Fred retorted. “And mamma, you see, it really is a very useful animal. Come, I’ll read you all about it,” said Fred, grasping the large book which was always near him. “‘The rose-bug, *auratus*, with arched wings and strong pincers for feeding, lives on caterpillars, larvæ and other vermin. This makes it very useful. Instead of being protected as it should be, it is ignorantly persecuted and destroyed.’ Do you see, mamma?”

“We won’t ignorantly persecute your bug, but it doesn’t belong either in your pocket or on the table. Take it away,” said the mother.

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“And you, Riki,” the aunt beckoned through the open door, “come in again and don’t behave as if a little beetle would kill you right away. You see, if you make such a dreadful noise for a trifle you’ll be punished some day. We will think that it means nothing and nobody will come to your rescue when you are in real trouble sometime.”

Riki entered, and as Fred was just going out with his beetle, they met at the door. In passing Fred said, “I’ll make a poem about you, for you certainly can make pretty noises. I know somebody else who is a great artist at it.”

“Yes, yes, Fred,” Riki retorted, “but one can make a poem about the awful beetles, too, that climb out of your pockets and crawl with horrible thin legs across the table.”

“Yes, one could,” confirmed Fred, going off to lodge his beetle in a box.

When the children packed up before going to bed, their mother said, “As you have no school tomorrow afternoon, Emmi, you can go to visit the sick Nora that day and every free day, as well as Sundays. She is looking forward to your visit.”

“It will be a blessing if Emmi has a girl friend at last. That will stop her from taking off other people’s friends,” Oscar said, delighted.

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Emmi made no reply and went her way, firmly resolved never to give up her friendship with Fani.

As the procession went upstairs to the bedrooms, Oscar ahead, then Emmi, the mother and aunt followed by the two youngest, Fred said to his sister, "Listen to me, Riki." Then he sang to a self-made melody:

"Baby Riki and Baby Hans
Resemble each other completely.
They sing like birds when they get a chance,
But not one-half so sweetly."

Riki was just going to answer this verse with loud complaints when the aunt turned about and took her hand, saying firmly:

"No, Riki, no more of that today, and it would be better if you never did do it any more. Just show Fred that he is wrong with his comparison."

Very often the mother found herself unable to go upstairs with the children, because at that time either her husband needed her or she was called away to assist sick people. If she found time, the children were glad to have both aunt and mother to divide among them. But tonight, the aunt going up alone, found it quite hard to

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prevent a fight. All four tried to keep her at their bedside as long as possible. It seemed dreadful to Fred to wait so long and when he at last had his turn he broke out, "Oh, aunty, I wish we could divide you in half and then multiply you by four. That would give us each two aunts and everyone would be satisfied." The aunt was quite anxious to stay with him a little while, but Kathy was already calling from below. She went with the promise to come to him first tomorrow night.

CHAPTER V

ON OAK RIDGE

WHEN the doctor from the Rhine had asked his colleague in Buchberg to find a suitable abode for Nora and Mrs. Stanhope, the latter had at once put his wife in charge of the affair. After a consultation with her sister she had decided to ask Mrs. Bickel to rent the strangers some of the rooms in her house. But here she fared badly, as Mrs. Bickel declared herself unable to give up any of the rooms, which she said they needed themselves. It was impossible for her to hide her indignation at the thought that strangers should live in the rooms where no one had ever entered. The doctor's wife had begged her not to take this inquiry in bad part, as it was so difficult to find a suite of several rooms in the village. For a long time Mrs. Bickel could not get over this experience and said to her husband repeatedly, "I certainly would like to know what Mrs. Keller means. Does she think we built our house for strangers?" Mr. Bickel had agreed and added, "and for people, besides,

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about whom one knows nothing. One might have nice experiences with such!"

The doctor's wife had then thought of a little house which a farmer had built on Oak Ridge. He lived in the first story, and the second, where his son was to move in with a new family in the fall, stood empty. Situated on the ridge the house had a gorgeous view down the valley over the green hills and the snow-mountains beyond, and towards the west over the rushing river in the forest. She had gone there at once and to her great delight had come to an agreement with the farmer. Soon after, the clean, bright rooms looked most inviting; she had helped to furnish them and they were ready for the strangers.

Several days had passed since Mrs. Stanhope and her daughter had arrived, and Nora, still tired after her journey, had seen no one beside the doctor and his wife. But a visit from Emmi had been promised her today. Nora sat at the western window where she could see the bright foaming waters of the mountain stream. She loved to look at the gleaming sky and the golden hills towards sunset.

Nora now spied a little girl running up the hill. Was this Emmi? She could hardly believe

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her eyes when Emmi never stopped a moment and came leaping up the hill in bounds. It seemed an impossible feat; the girl must drop down from sheer exhaustion. But next moment came a knock on the door and with glowing cheeks and a large bunch of blue and red flowers Emmi came in, presenting her gift at once. Mrs. Stanhope kindly greeted the visitor and begged her to sit down by Nora, who thanked Emmi cordially for the flowers. The two children presented a great contrast. Red-cheeked Emmi with her plump arms and lively motions made the delicate slight Nora seem still more frail: as if a light breeze might blow her about like a roseleaf. After looking at the two, Mrs. Stanhope's eyes grew moist and she went into the adjoining room.

“Where did you get those pretty flowers?” Nora asked the visitor.

“In the meadow on the way here,” replied Emmi. “There are so many red daisies now and forget-me-nots and purple gentians. Simply heaps and heaps. As soon as you are well, we'll go and pick forget-me-nots together, and then strawberries and later on blueberries.”

But Nora, shaking her head said solemnly, “No, I can't ever look forward to that.”

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This surprised Emmi, for she didn't understand. But an explanation dawned upon her now.

"You probably don't know about it, because you haven't any at home. But you'll enjoy it ever so much when you can come. You don't understand. It is so beautiful then that one doesn't ever want to go home."

"Yes, one always thinks it's so beautiful outside," said Nora thoughtfully, "but as soon as one goes out, one gets so fearfully tired that all the pleasure is gone."

Emmi looked up amazed. The child seemed to speak a language she could not comprehend, for Emmi was never tired. Every evening she was distressed that the day was done. She gazed perplexedly at Nora, and after judging her frail appearance, said quite relieved, "I know what you mean now. You see you are sick now, but wait till you are well. It will be different then and you'll be like me and never get tired."

Nora shook her head. "That won't ever be. I've always been tired and I won't look forward to the other because it will never come."

Emmi grew frightened. "But you must have something to look forward to, something you think of the first thing in the morning. You

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must trust my papa to make you well. You would get sadder all the time if you didn't have any pleasure."

"Yes, I look forward to one thing. When I see others like you jumping around and running up the hill, as you did just now, and I am always tired, I think how beautiful it will be in heaven. Beautiful flowers like roses and lilies grow there that never fade, and everybody is happy and well forever. Don't you look forward to heaven, too?"

Emmi didn't know what to say. She believed it was fine in heaven, but she'd rather stay here on earth: she had so many things that gave her pleasure and delight. But Nora apparently expected an answer, and Emmi finally said, "I never thought about it."

Nora looked at her friend with disappointment.

That's too bad," she said visibly depressed. "Now I can't talk to you about the wonderful life in heaven Clarissa has told me about. You don't like to, and I can't talk to anybody about it. Clarissa isn't coming and I am not allowed to talk to mamma. The minute I say a word about heaven she gets sad and begins to cry. I hoped I could talk to you as happily as I do with

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Clarissa, but it doesn't give you any pleasure apparently."

Emmi did not reply at once, pondering for consolation. Suddenly she cried, "I know something now! It is soon time for haying and fine dry heaps of hay will be scattered all over the meadows. You can go and lie down in them and we'll go there together every day. That can't make you tired."

But Nora only shook her head incredulously and remained silent. Emmi soon after rose to leave. Meanwhile Mrs. Stanhope had come in, and seeing her ready to depart, tried to keep Emmi from going. But as Nora did not urge her and Emmi seemed eager to leave, saying that it was rather late, she did not stop her. After a hasty farewell Emmi set out and simply flew down the hill without stopping. Breathing heavily, she reached the steps of her home and only then realized that she had returned much sooner than anyone had expected. Both boys would be sure to make disagreeable remarks about it, so she cast about in her mind for an excuse. "I'll look for aunty," she said to herself, resolved to tell her all about the visit. She had really not known

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what to talk to Nora about, and her aunt would understand and prevent her brothers from being sarcastic. Rushing upstairs, she unfortunately met her brother Fred, who was just coming down.

“Aha, something has happened with your new friend! Otherwise you wouldn't be back already,” cried Fred. Emmi, not deigning to reply, ran towards the room where her aunt sat alone at a work-table. Her mother had just risen, having been called to the kitchen. Emmi came close to her aunt, afraid that someone would interfere before she had explained all.

Margaret was waiting in the kitchen. The doctor's wife set a chair near the table and poured out a cup of coffee she found standing on the range, and sitting down beside her, began: “Take your time, Margaret. I have wanted to talk with you for quite a while. I didn't send for you only on account of the old clothes, but also on account of Elсли. The child is very close to my heart, as you know. She looks dreadfully pale and too thin to be carrying little Hans around while both the others hang on to her skirts. She can't stand that long, remember. You only need to look at her to see how slight and weak she is,

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You must see to it that she doesn't carry the boy any longer, and the other two shouldn't hang on her, either."

"Yes, yet, Mrs. Keller, that is easily said," Margaret retorted, "but what can people like us do? I've my hands full from morning till night to see that they all have clothes on their backs and something to eat. I can't have those cry-babies round me while I am at work, and no one but Elсли can help me. Who else should do it? Fani is big and could help her, but he forgets. He isn't bad but thoughtless, and is always off somewhere. I know she has it a bit hard, but she must get used to it. It won't get easier for her later on."

"But Margaret," argued the doctor's wife, "the child is not strong like other children. She can't stand it, believe me. And what will you do if she gets sick?"

"Indeed I don't know. We poor people have enough troubles without thinking of others to come. All I know is that I can't spare Elсли. The older she gets, the harder she'll find it, for as soon as she can earn a bit, she'll have to go into the factory. That won't be easier than seeing to the boys. But Fani comes first. Cousin Fekli has

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an eye on him already and is taking him next Easter. I know that Cousin Fekli does it for his own profit. He'll make him work all right."

"Are you related to Mr. Bickel, Margaret?" asked the mother.

"Surely!" replied Margaret. "He's my third cousin from the grandfather. Since he's a gentleman, he's forgotten it a bit, but I don't care. I go on as usual, and when I meet him, I say, "How-de-do, Cousin?" If he turns round and pretends not to hear and then greets me as if he hardly knew my name, it's his lookout. I'm glad he knows Fani and has an eye on him. We need a bit of money badly."

The doctor's wife now fetched the bag Elslie had left, filled with clothes.

"But remember, Margaret," she said, giving it to the woman, "spare the child wherever you can. You must promise me that and I'll help you wherever I can."

"I will as much as I can," promised Margaret, adding immediately after, "You must realize that I have my work to do and she must do the best she can with the boys. Everybody is well just now and still we need everybody to help get enough food for us all. What can I do? If

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somebody gets ill, then it's quite a different matter and means much harder work. How can I change it? It hits me the hardest after all. No one knows how it goes with poor people unless they are poor themselves. I often have to think that the Lord doesn't love all his children alike."

"No, Margaret, you mustn't think that," said Mrs. Keller gently, in her heart pitying the poor family very much. "There are worse ills than poverty, and God must know why we have to bear them. But I know that poverty is very bitter, and I am only sorry I can't help you more."

With a heavy heart the mother went back to the room. She felt that Elsli would not stand her heavy burdens very long. Sighing profoundly, she sat down by her sister, who always had a word of comfort and found a way out of most perplexities. But before Emmi's outburst was silenced and the mother could begin, Kathy stuck her head in at the door once more. "Madam, another one is here now."

"Another one! Who is it, Kathy," said the mother with a slight reproach. "What is her name?"

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“As if anybody could remember a name like that,” retorted Kathy.

“Are you perhaps keeping Mrs. Stanhope waiting?” asked the aunt.

“That’s the very one,” Kathy assented, continuing angrily, “If she were called Beanpole it might stick in one’s head. How can anybody remember such a stupid name as that?”

The mother had gone out and led Mrs. Stanhope into the parlor. Mrs. Stanhope had come to ask if Mrs. Keller could not find a child who could do errands for her in the village, as the maid could not spend all her time running about. Possibly a child could be found who had time between school hours.

Mrs. Keller immediately thought of Elslie. How much better that would be than always dragging the boys about. Besides, if Elslie earned a bit of money for Margaret, the latter would be sure to make no difficulties.

“I know a very nice, sweet girl you would be sure to like,” she said, “but I am not quite sure whether her mother will let her come: she has much use for her at home.”

“Promise her good wages,” said Mrs.

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Stanhope, pleased. That's just the kind of little girl I'd like to have. Tell her mother she shall not regret it: she only needs to say how much she wants."

The doctor's wife was delighted with these prospects and resolved to go to Margaret at once and settle the matter. After accompanying Mrs. Stanhope for a distance, she turned into a field-path leading to Hiri's little cottage.

She found Margaret alone at home at her washtub. Mrs. Keller, standing beside her, began to explain the matter, and soon after everything was settled. Margaret, glad to get a little money, would see to the boys herself, while Elсли, of course, would not be gone for good. Next day at eleven o'clock she was to go to Mrs. Stanhope and begin her new work.

Later that evening, as the sisters sat together mending stockings the mother wanted to know what Emmi had told the aunt so eagerly that afternoon. Apparently Emmi's visit had been a failure, as the two children had nothing to say to each other. This astonished the mother, because Emmi was usually so lively, and she also felt disappointed, as she had hoped that Emmi might cheer Nora, while the refined girl would have a

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good influence on Emmi's loud and restless nature. Nothing could be done for the present, but, after all, friendships were not always formed at once, and the two might still have another chance. To this the aunt shook her head. From Emmi's words she had clearly seen that the girls were too different in their outlook, tastes and interests ever to be drawn together. Next they talked of Elslie's new prospect and they were both happy at the thought that the frail child, at least for a time, would not have to carry about such heavy burdens.

CHAPTER VI

THE AUNT IS NEEDED AGAIN

THE following day Elсли very quietly stepped into the house on Oak Ridge. The door of the living room stood open, and Nora, sitting in her chair, saw Elсли. She had not heard her enter and was surprised. Elсли looked very attractive. She had carefully smoothed her hair, which, however, lightly curled about her forehead, and her mother had let her put on a clean apron and neckcloth because she was going to rich strangers. Her small face was very pale and her gentle blue eyes gazed seriously at Nora. Apparently the little one did not know whether she was to step into the room or not.

“Come in,” beckoned Nora. When Elсли had quietly come to her side, she asked, “Are you the child who is to do errands for us?”

Elsli in a soft low voice answered yes. There was something sweet and frail in her whole nature which pleased Nora very much. Stretching out her hand, she said, “Come, sit down here. Let’s talk together a little bit.”

Elsli obeyed.

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“Isn't your name Elсли?” Nora began again. “Mamma had you come so you can fetch me silk and eggs and pencils and other things. But you can stay with me a little while, can't you? Or will it make you too tired if you still have to get those things before noon?”

“Oh, no, that won't make me tired,” replied Elсли. “I'd get much more tired at home, because I'd have to carry Hans on my arm and take the other two with me.”

“Oh, then you know what it is like to be tired, so very, very tired,” said Nora in suspense.

“Oh, yes, I know it very well,” Elсли assured her. “I am nearly always tired, but sometimes so dreadfully that I'd just like to lie down and never get up. Hans is getting so heavy that I can hardly carry him: but he won't stand up and only shrieks and gets cross if I don't pick him up.”

“Then you really know what it is like to be very, very tired, Elсли!” cried Nora, delighted at the other's understanding. “I am so glad, because I can really talk to you now. Yes, that's the way one feels. One would like to lie down and never get up at all till something new should happen, something that would change everything. Don't you think so, Elсли?”

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“Nothing new ever does happen, though. In the end one would have to get up again after all,” thought Elsli.

“No, I don’t mean what you think. I mean to lie down and die. Wouldn’t you like to die, Elsli?”

“No, I don’t think I’d like to, but I never thought of it. Why do you ask?”

“The only reason is that you don’t know how it will be. Clarissa told me everything about it and we always talk it over. But I must never talk to mamma about it. She is sad for days if I do and cries terribly. But I can tell you about it, and you’ll look forward to heaven, too. I’ll teach you Clarissa’s beautiful song, too. Shall I say it?”

Elsli was quite willing to hear it, but Mrs. Stanhope came in just then to greet the child. She was surprised when she saw the two sitting close together and talking as if they were friends already. Her surprise still grew when Nora said, “Oh, mamma, I hope you can wait for the silk, and I don’t need the pencils, either. I don’t care at all if I get the eggs and we can let the kitchen-girl get them later on. I’d love to have Elsli stay with me a while.”

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“Surely, if it gives you pleasure,” said the mother, pleased that Nora, who was always so indifferent, at last asked something definite. “Besides,” she added, “there is enough time this evening for errands, when Elslie comes back again.”

Both children’s eyes lit up. Nora saw the long-dreaded hours of the day enlivened by a new congenial friendship, and it was a real feast for Elslie to sit quietly beside Nora, who was so good to her. But as Mrs. Stanhope did not leave the room, Nora did not mention her song at that time, anxious not to give her mother pain. This restraint made Nora more quiet than the mother wished her to be. The child lived mostly in all the lovely things old Clarissa had told her, for the old nurse with her experience had realized Nora’s failing condition. Therefore she thought it wise to prepare the child for death and make her going easier. As her own soul was filled with longing for the blessed land, it had not been difficult to impart it to Nora’s impressionable mind.

Elsie was asked to tell of her life at home and her brothers and sisters. This at once brought her to speak of Fani, whom she admired and loved so passionately. She could not say enough

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in his favor. Fani was so nice and good and clever besides, and always helped her with her school work. She didn't see how she could ever live without him, he was her sole happiness. If she was sad and tired, and Fani came home, he was able to cheer her up at once, because he was naturally gay himself. He always saw a rosy future before him and could talk of it with such joy and expectation that he made her confident, too, just when she had thought she could never be happy and would always have to endure pain and sorrow.

Mrs. Stanhope listened with great pleasure to Elсли, her voice was so pleasant and low and the expression of her dark blue eyes so gentle. Nora, too, listened eagerly to everything Elсли said: one could see with what pleasure and interest she followed the recital. When Mrs. Stanhope said at last, "You can go home now, child, but we expect you back at four o'clock," Nora immediately added, "Come as soon as you can, Elсли, and tell your mother that you'll only be back at eight tonight."

Elсли, promising to do so, went away with a light heart. What a surprise to have the sick girl talk to her instead of having to do lots of errands!

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Both the mother, of whom she had been a bit afraid, and the child had been so friendly. It filled her heart with gratitude. At four Elсли hastened away from school without even saying good-bye to Emmi. She was afraid of being detained, and her fear was not in vain. Calling her name loudly, someone ran after her at once. Elсли recognized Feklitus's voice.

"Wait, wait! I want you for something!" he commanded.

"No, no, I can't!" Elсли shouted back. "I gave a promise," and with this she flew away like a deer. For a while, Feklitus, visibly angered, ran after her, constantly uttering threats. Breathing hard and glowing with rage he at last stood still, realizing that he could never catch up with the nimble Elсли. He was truly furious, as there had obviously been a good reason for his behavior.

Elсли had to catch her breath before entering the house on the ridge, as she had raced along without a stop.

Nora, who was already waiting for her, cried eagerly as soon as she saw her, "Come Elсли, and rest yourself up here. You must never run so hard as that."

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Elsli obeyed. Nora was alone in the room and joyfully welcomed Elsli. The latter sat down and was told at once that she needn't go out at all. Nora had received Mrs. Stanhope's permission to have Elsli's company for the evening, and she had gone out herself, something she never did if Nora was left alone.

"I have so much to tell you, Elsli," Nora went on. "I suppose you have never thought what it will be like when we leave the earth and go to heaven."

Elsli shook her head. "No, I never have."

"Oh," cried Nora, full of animation, "perhaps you don't even know how lovely it will be there. Much lovelier than any place you have ever seen. There won't be any sick people and no one will ever be tired. Everybody will be happy. Sometimes they will meet amidst the flowers near the river and rejoice together. But wait, I must tell you Clarissa's song. That will show you how beautiful everything is."

Nora's large eyes gleamed more and more and a deep flush suffused her usually pale cheeks while she said her song.

Elsli was greatly surprised by the complete change in Nora; her eyes gleamed and her face

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was animated, while her voice trembled from inner agitation as she pictured these things to herself. Elсли was motionless with wonder.

“Don’t you like the song, Elсли?” asked Nora after a pause.

“Surely,” replied the other.

“Wouldn’t you like to go there with me? It is going to be so beautiful!” asked Nora again.

“Are you going?” asked Elсли uncertainly.

“Yes, I shall go,” replied Nora confidently. “Clarissa told me long ago how Philo went, and I am sure to follow soon. She said how lovely it was there, how all tired people can walk about near the river amidst beautiful flowers and never-more get tired. I’ll tell you everything by and by. You understand it now, don’t you, and you’ll want to come, too, when I go, won’t you?”

“Yes, I’d like to,” said Elсли, carried away more and more by all the blissful hopes which lit up Nora’s eyes. “But do you think we just can go when we want to?”

“Oh, no, it isn’t that way, Elсли. God calls everybody when their time comes. I only asked you if you’d like to go so we can talk it over together. Perhaps God will call us both at once, because you are so tired, too. Clarissa said she

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could tell by this that God would call me soon. Just think how nice it would be if we both went to heaven together and could walk about well and happy among the roses and lilies near the stream."

Elsli's eyes grew bigger, too, as she vividly pictured the glorious land to herself. Nora kept on talking and telling such joyful things that a new world opened out for the listener. The hours simply flew.

While these two were quietly talking together, the doctor's house was filled with noisy life. Oscar, Emmi and Fred had run off in three different directions immediately after school. Fred meant to go home to read his aunt a thrilling description of a curious bird and was delighted when he saw the two older ones running off. He hastened along to make use of his opportunity, and when he spied Feklitus threatening and calling wildly to Elsli, Fred cried after him with a sly smile, "Isn't it lucky you have Elsli, Feklitus? You needn't mind asking her questions." Fred had discovered that whenever Feklitus did not understand something in school, he sought out Elsli. But before the big boys and

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girls in school he always pretended not to need such help. So Fred rushed on and shortly after reached the house. Through the open kitchen door he spied his aunt stirring a pudding. As she carefully read from a slip of paper, "Take four large eggs, two spoons of flour and a lemon-peel," she was violently disturbed by Fred's flinging himself upon her with cries of delight. "Oh, how wonderful to find you alone, aunty!" he exclaimed, sitting down on a kitchen chair, the beloved book spread on his knees. "Did you know, papa once caught a bittern? Just hear about its life and habits. Here it is: 'The bittern, *stellaris*'—are you listening, aunty?"

"Yes, yes, I hear you, just go on."

—" 'is orange with black stripes and the feathers at the neck resemble a collar. It lives in the moderate climate of Europe, is melancholy and irritable, and gives forth curious howls at night. Its natural voice usually sounds like krany, krany, but the howls are, iiprumb, iiprumb! It becomes violent when pursued. The female lays four large eggs.' Did you hear me, aunty? Do you know what I read last?"

"Yes. The female lays four large eggs—

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two spoons of flour and a lemon-peel," said the aunt, unconsciously following her own thoughts.

Fred looked at his aunt with wide-open eyes. She had apparently not spoken in fun.

"Oh," she corrected herself, having realized the mistake, "I got into my recipe. Go on now."

"All right, that is different," remarked Fred. "I hope you don't think birds lay lemon-peels. Now I'll go on. 'The meat tastes like——'"

The reading was suddenly interrupted as Oscar with long steps rushed into the room, followed by Emmi, and both came close to the aunt on each side. They wanted her to hear well, but the poor woman was now unable even to move her spoon. "Just think, aunty!" cried Oscar, getting more excited every moment, while Emmi whispered into her ear, "Now Feklitus suddenly refuses to have the other verse put on the flag. He once heard one he likes still better and wants to use that instead. What shall we do, aunty? You have no idea how obstinate he is when he wants anything. If one doesn't give way he immediately withdraws his help."

"Emmi, be quiet a minute, I'll hear you later," said the aunt. "Tell us the new verse, Oscar, so we can see if it's suitable."

"Listen!

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“‘Equality, Freedom, Brotherhood divine!

Sound of happy voices and juice of luscious vine.’”

went on Oscar.

“Is that all?” asked the aunt.

Oscar nodded.

“We can’t possibly embroider that on our flag,” she reassured him. “Tell Feklitus there isn’t a verb in his sentence and we can’t use it. Tell him to ask the teacher, too. And Oscar, you know what? If Feklitus insists on shining at the feast, you can ask him to make the festive speech!”

Oscar seized upon this wonderful idea with great enthusiasm. A festive speech! He had never even thought of that. The next moment he was gone, eager to start the needed preparations and let the others know.

“Don’t you think so, aunty?” Emmi repeated several times when her turn had come.

“I don’t know what you asked me. I couldn’t hear on both sides at once,” was the answer.

“What was it, Emmi?”

“I said—and I am sure you think the same, aunty—that it would be a terrible shame for Fani to go to the factory. Then he wouldn’t have any more time to draw. He must become a painter, don’t you think so? And as soon as pos-

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sible, too, so he won't have to go to the factory. Otherwise it will be too late and he'll never get out again."

"It isn't such an easy matter to become a painter and one doesn't know whether Fani has enough talent for it. It needs more than just making nice drawings in school."

"Oh, aunty, all I want you to say is that you think Fani should become a painter rather than work in the factory. Don't you agree with me?" Emmi seemed as urgent as if the matter had to be settled at once.

The aunt replied kindly, "If he really had some prospects of becoming a painter, I think it would be lovely for him, but there is not the slightest chance."

"Can I go on now, aunty? Emmi only talks nonsense," Fred interrupted. But Emmi would not let him.

"Please, aunty, just explain one word to me," she begged. "What does 'decoration' mean?"

"It means adorning. But what have you to do with decoration?"

"It also means the background in a theatre," added Fred.

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“Oh that is fine!” Emmi cried, delighted, and ran away.

For a moment Fred seemed to meditate. “Did you notice, aunty, that Emmi had something special in her mind? Do you think she is going to run away with a theatrical troupe?”

“No, Fred, I don’t think so,” replied the aunt without any qualms on that subject. “Emmi hasn’t any such nonsense in her head.”

“You can believe me, aunty,” said Fred, like one who has learned by experience, “Emmi has something definite in her mind. Otherwise she wouldn’t have asked what the word means. She never cares for information. Do you see?”

It was impossible to give an answer, as loud, rather well-known cries came from outside. “A snake! A snake! A snake!” Fred, putting his hand into his pocket, rushed outside, while his aunt gave a breath of relief. At last she could go on and concentrate on her pudding: it was high time for it, too. But no! the shrieks on the stairs took on such a character that she pushed away the bowl and ran outside. In the middle of the stairs stood Riki, staring with wild yells at the next step, where a cunning little lizard ran to

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and fro. Fred sat a step higher, eagerly waiting for her to stop.

“How stupid you are, Riki!” said the aunt gently. “If you are so terribly afraid of the animal, why don’t you run away?”

“It will run after me, it is a snake!” yelled Riki, rooted to the spot with fear.

“Fred, take the lizard away. You can see how frightened she is,” said the aunt. “I suppose it is yours as usual.”

“Surely; I had it in my pocket and it must have crawled out while I read to you. I think Riki should be cured at last. I only waited till she should be friends with the lizard.”

The aunt agreed heartily that Riki ought to be cured. Fred’s method had no other results than shrieks, but a real cure would have to be different. For the present Fred was to go outside with his little animal and she upstairs. The noise must cease. Finally the aunt returned to the kitchen and this time finished her pudding in peace.

CHAPTER VII

WHAT OSCAR FOUND AND EMMI INSTIGATES

FEKLITUS had undertaken the festive speech with great satisfaction and duly informed his parents of the event. It made a great impression on Mr. and Mrs. Bickel and they resolved to come to the feast and hear Feklitus's first venture as public speaker. A brand-new suit was ordered for the occasion and that same evening he was measured for a new pair of boots.

Feklitus could be seen silently walking about these days, visibly occupied by deep thoughts. He had just come out of school with a long unwilling leap, having been pushed from behind by the eager children, who had no patience. But Feklitus was in no mood at all for leaping. He arrived below with deep frowns and did not run off with happy shouts like the others. Quite slowly and without a word he walked ponderously around the corner of the school-house and posted himself there. When all the boys had gone by, the girls passed, sometimes in pairs or groups. At

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last came Elсли by herself, apparently in a great hurry. She was a little late, because she had carefully written down her lessons for the morrow. All of a sudden she was held fast and pulled aside.

“Let me go, Feklitus. I must go quickly to Nora; she expects me,” she said.

“I only want to ask you something. I’ll let you go right away,” he replied authoritatively, holding fast to her skirt.

“Then do it quickly, Feklitus. I must go.”

“Tell me,” began Feklitus, “If you had to make a speech at a song-festival, how would you begin?”

“Oh, what a stupid question. I’ll never have to do that,” cried Elсли, trying to escape. But the boy’s fist was firm.

“I didn’t say you would have to,” he continued, “I only said if—if—one can say if to everything. Answer me. How would you begin if you had to make a speech at a song festival?”

“I don’t know. I know nothing about it. I never thought of such a thing.” And Elсли pulled to get herself free.

“Then try to think! You must say how you’d begin, or I won’t let you go till night time,” said Feklitus, clutching her skirt still tighter. I’ll

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begin it myself and you can go on. That will be easier for you. But do it or It begins: Honored gentlemen and brothers. Go on now.”

“Let me go. You see I have to,” implored Elсли. “I can’t really tell you anything.”

“You horrid, obstinate creature!” Feklitus burst out, enraged. “Just wait and I’ll repay you. You’ll see what will happen as soon as you work in the factory, and the time isn’t very far off.”

Uncertain terrors rose in Elсли’s imagination. She did not pull any more to get free, but thought. After a little while she said, “I’d begin this way: Honored gentlemen and brothers: As we have sung so beautifully just now, we’ll be happy together and celebrate it with a splendid feast ——”

Elсли flew away like an arrow. While listening she had been conscious of the boy’s relaxed grasp. He gazed furiously after her. As she was too far away now to be pursued, he thoughtfully went his way.

The great festival was set for Sunday, for which day the aunt had promised to finish the flag. But a rehearsal was to take place before, to try out the speech and the order of the procession.

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A table-cover would be used that day instead of the flag. Oscar had chosen Saturday afternoon.

He had barely time for lunch that day, and after hastily swallowing down a little food, seemed anxious to get up and run away. Emmi was still more restless and clearly had her mind on something. She swallowed everything as in a fever, glanced at the clock every moment and gave curious answers to questions. As soon as the last mouthful was gone from her father's plate, she begged, "Can I go, mamma?"

"And I, too?" questioned Oscar as hastily.

"What are they up to again, I wonder?" said their father.

Emmi was already outside.

"You'll see tomorrow, papa," said Oscar proudly. "Today we'll build the platform for the orator and plan the procession. Won't you come and hear Feklitus's speech, papa?"

"No, thank you, but I'll appear on your festive grounds at night with your mother and aunt. Are you one of the celebrants, too, Fred?"

"No, I have more useful things to do," answered the boy solemnly. "It is more useful to find and examine the smallest frog than celebrate a thousand festivals."

Riki quickly moved away from her brother:

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he might have a specimen right on hand. Oscar with a pitying glance toward Fred went out.

That afternoon the mother sat peacefully in the garden with her sister. The basket with torn clothing stood before them, and while their agile fingers mended the worn stockings, they talked over many things, especially the dispositions of the children, for whom they felt an equal love and interest.

“It is curious how things repeat themselves in this life,” said the mother now. “When the children tell me how Feklitus runs after Elslī I always think of old times. Do you remember how Gritli, Elslī’s mother, when pursued by the short, fat Fekli, would lightly run away and call back from time to time:

“‘Try to catch me! I don’t care,
Fekli runs like a clumsy bear.’”

The aunt could well remember these scenes and heartily laughed at the remembrance. “Gritli didn’t compose that poem, though,” she added. “Our brother made it up for her. Do you remember how much he enjoyed these fruitless chases?”

The mother could not answer because they were startled by cries.

“It can’t be Fred frightening her. I hear him

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on the other side," said the mother, beginning to fail in her recent resolution. By now the cries had taken on such a tone of desperation that both women flew outside. At first, though it sounded quite close, they saw nothing, but soon they discovered the child in a dreadful plight. She had fallen into the pool and was sticking in the green slimy water up to her neck, holding her arms up desperately to keep off the green frogs which gaily leaped about. The aunt reached the pit first, and going down a few steps, seized the child and pulled her out with considerable exertion.

When Riki at last felt herself cared for, she began to cry bitterly and complain. "Oh, why didn't you come?" she exclaimed. There was not much time to answer, as her condition demanded prompt attention. Both women hurried her to the house where the slime-covered child was put into the bathtub. The mother had been called away and the aunt sat alone by the bathing child. "I'll now answer the question you asked me a little while ago," she said. "As you utter such terrible shrieks every time that Fred comes near you with a tiny frog or beetle, mother and I decided not to go near you this time. Only Fred's singing has saved you, because it showed he was not near you. If it hadn't been for him you might

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still be sticking in that slimy water, with the frogs hopping all about you. So don't forget this experience, Riki, and learn to control your silly fears. Something much worse might happen to you some day if you don't get over that foolish habit." Riki had listened attentively and after her recent fright these words made a deep impression on her.

Oscar with the others had reached the place chosen for their festivities, where the speech and the procession were to be tried. A banquet with real currant-juice and cake, which the aunt had promised, was to be the end tomorrow. The platform consisted of four posts stuck into the ground and skilfully covered with four boards. Feklitus mounted it and began:

"Honored gentlemen and brothers: As we have sung so beautifully just now, let us be happy together and celebrate a splendid feast and touch our glasses."

Feklitus came down from the stage again.

"Go on!" cried some in the front row.

"The speech is done, we'll touch our glasses now and drink together," said the orator, pleased at having got through his speech so well. But a great tumult had begun. Most of the boys found the speech too short and tried to push Feklitus

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back to the platform. Only Oscar, who usually took the lead, stood there silent and perplexed. The words had made a great impression on him. How could Feklitus have thought of something he had entirely ignored and which was of such importance to their feast. Of course there must be singing, or no one would even know it was a song-festival. Oscar, swallowing his first anger at not having been the originator of this idea, flung himself into the noisy crowd and cried loudly, "Be still. Let's first find out who of us can sing; we must study some beautiful song together."

But the sad discovery was made that no one was able. Feklitus, who could not sing himself, thought the singing superfluous. But Oscar, who could not repeat a note correctly, had realized that they must sing. He called loudly for Fani, and the others also, for they remembered that Fani had a good voice. Fani, however, was not among the crowd, and soon Oscar as well as the others ran off in different directions, leaving the place with the platform completely forsaken. Oscar rushed home. What was to become of his loudly proclaimed festival if there was to be no singing. It had to be brought about somehow. How his papa would make fun of him and the

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deliberate Fred would mock him! No, it must not be! If Fani sang, the others could join in with the tune. Arrived at home, he went into a room where a moment before Emmi had entered.

“Where is Fani?” he cried out excitedly. “Have you made him untrue to us again, Emmi? I suppose he is off on one of your little exploits.”

Emmi blushed a little but said nothing. That moment Kathy stuck her head in at the door. “Margaret is outside. She asked if anybody knew where Fani is. She has looked for him everywhere, as he is needed in a hurry,” she cried out in one breath and promptly disappeared. Emmi blushed scarlet up to her hair and began to nudge her aunt. The latter knew something must have happened, and taking the child’s hand, went outside. Her mother followed to see what had brought Margaret so suddenly. The woman related with great excitement that Cousin Fekli had come to see them. He intended to take Fani to the factory at once on all his free afternoons and after school. There was a special task the boy could do. This would bring them a nice little sum of money. Fekli wanted to speak to Fani himself, who, however, was nowhere to be found, and Cousin Fekli must not be kept waiting too

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long. He'd get dreadfully angry if Fani did not come back with her.

Oscar was called and bidden to look for Fani. Margaret could go quietly home and Fani would be sent as soon as found.

Meanwhile Emmi had come into her aunt's bedroom. As soon as they were alone, Emmi clutched her arm and cried plaintively: "Oh, help me, aunty, so nothing worse will happen and papa won't get angry. Please help me so that Fani's mother can see how well he'll get along and that he'll probably become a famous painter. He went away to Basle today."

"What do you mean, Emmi? What are you saying? I hope to gracious this isn't true," cried the aunt, perplexed.

"But it is, aunty. Please go to Fani's mother and tell her it's all right. Oh, she mustn't come and complain to papa!" she begged. "I'll tell you all about it and then you'll see how nice it will be for Fani. But you must tell Margaret, too. You see there was an announcement in the paper the other day. It was like this: 'A painter of decorations in Basle wants a boy of eleven or twelve to help him at his work. He can also learn the trade.' The address was given, too. I showed

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it to Fani because we had long been puzzling how he could become a painter and escape the factory: it seemed just the right thing. You remember you said decoration meant adorning and Fred said it also meant background for a theatre. I knew Fani could paint beautiful flowers, wreaths and trees for that man, and when I told him, he was dreadfully anxious to go. First we meant to tell his mother, but he decided not to afterwards. He was sure she wouldn't call that work, but fooling, and would never let him go. So we decided he should go and I was to explain everything later on. He meant to write home at once and tell them he was going to be a painter."

"Gracious heavens, Emmi! What terrible trouble you have started!" exclaimed the aunt. "It is simply dreadful! What will become of the boy and how can he get to Basle without money?"

Emmi said she had given him all she owned. Everything would be all right, if only aunty explained it to his mother. The aunt knew this was the first step to take, after which some one would have to write to Basle and find out if he had reached the address and who the painter was. The aunt lost no time. Tying on a cape, she hur-

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ried to Hiri's cottage, which Mr. Bickel left the moment the aunt entered. She heard the concluding remark: "As I said before, this vagabonding will have to stop for good. I'll take all lost time away from his wages."

"He'll have to get some before you can take them away," said Margaret in an undertone, while Mr. Bickel ponderously departed.

The aunt entered the house. From the street one went through a low door, first into the kitchen, and from there into another room. Near the open door stood two very old cradles, one for the baby and one for Hans. On the other side stood the washtub, which Margaret had moved here in order to be able to do her work and keep an eye on the children, too. Though he was two years old, Hans still had his cradle. Since Elsi's absence, whenever he started his well-known howls, his mother laid him in there and the gentle rocking would soothe the child to sleep. On one side of it stood little Hiri and on the other Rudi, who, by pushing it to and fro had already succeeded in putting Hans to sleep. The aunt sat down on a wooden chair near the tub, begging Margaret to go on with her work, as she had something to tell her. As sparingly as possible

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she informed Margaret of Fani's journey, promising to lose no time in writing to Basle and inquiring after him. They would also send for him at once, if his parents wished it.

Margaret had not forgotten Mr. Bickel's threat, and the employment Fani was to get had lost something of its glory. If Fani could earn his food and clothing in Basle and learn besides some trade which would make him independent before long, it might be a better prospect than if he remained at home. These thoughts whirled through Margaret's brain, and she seemed satisfied. Of course she would be grateful if the aunt took the matter into her hands and found out if Fani was really learning a proper trade. She'd talk with the father and let her know of his decision. Margaret seemed quite convinced that he would agree with her. The aunt felt wonderfully relieved. She had feared Margaret would make a scene and violently blame Emmi for her share in the boy's departure. Asking after Elslie, she heard that the child spent all her free time on Oak Ridge and was no help to her any more at home. She did the best she could with the boys now, and had no reason to complain. The sick child's mother was a good, sensible woman,

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who knew poor people needed something. Elslie every evening brought money home and so many clothes besides that she was provided for quite a while ahead. The news overjoyed the aunt, who returned home with a light heart. Everything had been much easier than she had expected.

Oscar met her half way. He had seen Emmi expectantly waiting for some one, no doubt their aunt. But as his affairs with her were very pressing, he secretly ran from the back of the house towards the woods. As soon as he saw her coming, he flung himself upon her, pouring out the whole sad story of the festival. He knew everybody would only laugh at him now, when there would not even be singing. But he had a splendid new idea. Couldn't it be changed from a song festival to something else? Then the flag could be used, as well as the speech with a slight change. If the aunt could suggest another festival, Oscar could easily manage the rest. To this the aunt objected. There was no sense in having a feast for no particular occasion, and it was better to put it off.

Oscar was deeply disappointed, but he saw that nothing could be done. As he went into the house, the prospect of the coming supper loomed before him. Papa was sure to question him about

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the feast, and the whole miserable failure would be revealed. Emmi rushed out from her hiding place, eager to hear of the consequences of Fani's exploit, but she was obliged to sit down without being satisfied. Their father had come home, which meant that it was supper time. With drooping heads both older children sat through the meal, hoping to be less noticed in that position. Fred had sent several searching glances in their direction before he said, "There is a bird called ostrich, or *struthio*, which hides its head in the sand, hoping thereby that the hunter won't see it. Those birds live in Africa and are very scarce in our climate. Those seen in these parts live on potato salad."

But Oscar, eating his salad, was too busy with his thoughts and took no notice of this description. His father, gazing in his direction, only laughed a little as he said, "I suppose he is crushed by the joys of the coming feast." But when no further questions were asked and nothing said about Fani, Oscar and Emmi rose with lighter hearts. Even if Oscar had to endure some sarcasms and Emmi a severe scolding, time was gained at least, and they still had their aunt to comfort and advise them.

CHAPTER VIII

AT SUNSET

SINCE the day when Elсли had first come to Nora they had become daily companions and the question of doing errands had not even come up. Nora, after impatiently awaiting Elсли, would never let her leave the room. Mrs. Stanhope, only too eager to fulfill her daughter's wishes, had been satisfied, for Nora really looked much happier since she had Elсли for a friend. In Elсли, too, a change had taken place, for, being very adaptable, she had unconsciously taken on the color of her surroundings. Nora had spoken to her of her deepest thoughts and had shared everything with her. This made Elсли take on Nora's ways, from the tone of her voice, the use of words to even the motions of her hands. In school also there was a change. As soon as Elсли arrived at Oak Ridge, her books were unpacked and all her lessons done. Nora had always been a good student and she found great pleasure in helping her little pupil along by explaining what she did not understand. Elсли was glad to be able to come

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to school with her lessons properly done like the others, and already the teacher had several times said, "You did that well, Elсли. I'm very well satisfied with you."

After the lessons were done the girls sat close together and talked. Nora never grew tired of describing the beautiful country she meant to go to, and Elсли followed her words entranced. Nora had the gift of making everything vivid for Elсли, who found these conversations very blissful. She also loved to hear Clarissa's song. Only when evening had come and Elсли had to go, she grew a little frightened as she said, "If only you don't have to go alone, Nora, and I have to stay! What should I do then?" But Nora comforted her. If Elсли begged God very hard He would surely hear her and let her go to heaven, too. With a light heart Elсли would then go home.

The sunny month of September had come. The children sat at the open window and looked out at the sunset sky. Nora had been tired all day and had talked very little. They were very silent as they watched the flaming colors in the sky spreading like a stream of gold over hills and trees and meadows.

"Look, Elсли, look!" exclaimed Nora with

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more brilliant eyes than her companion had ever seen. "Look at that crystal river! Oh, I want to go over the stream where everything is so lovely. All the flowers gleam, and people are happy and never get weary. Oh, I am so tired now! Won't you come a little nearer to me, Elсли?" Elсли came quite close and Nora laid her head on her shoulder. "Oh," added the sick child in a whisper, "now I feel happy. I seem to see into the very heart of heaven, which stands wide open. Everything shines and gleams. Oh, how beautiful it is! Oh, how beautiful!" Elсли had never before in her life, either, seen such an intense golden light spread over all the hills, and she gazed out in silence, too. Thus the children lay motionless a long while. The glow had faded and evening had come, spreading a white mist over the meadow below. Mrs. Stanhope, who had been writing letters in the next room, now entered. She went up to her daughter, who still leaned on Elсли's shoulder.

"God in heaven!" cried out the mother. "Nora, my child! It can't be possible! Wake up! Answer me, Nora!"

Mrs. Stanhope knelt down and drew Nora down to her. After a glance at the white still

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face, she threw herself upon her child and sobbed in sheer despair.

Snow-white from fright, Elсли stood up. What had happened to Nora that made her mother so unhappy?

“Fetch the doctor, child, and run as fast as you can,” she cried out between her sobs. Elсли hurried off, but instead of the doctor found only his wife at home. As soon as she heard what had happened she said, “I think poor sick Nora has gone to heaven. She’ll be happy now forever.”

Elсли was stunned by this blow. “Oh, has she gone already?” she cried out. Tears rushed from her eyes and her whole body shook from inner agitation.

“Poor little Elсли!” said the doctor’s wife, seizing her hand. “Come, sit down a moment.” But Elсли was too much distressed to do so. Holding her apron to her eyes, she ran away, moaning pitifully, “Oh, oh, now she has gone without me.” When she returned to Mrs. Stanhope, she found the mother still despairingly bent over her child and sobbing as when she left her. Elсли sat down on a stool and cried quietly. In this way an hour passed.

Then the doctor came. After stooping over

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Nora a little while, he turned to the mother. "Mrs. Stanhope," he said quickly but with deep sympathy in his voice, "there is nothing more for me to do here. Try to bear what is inevitable. Your child is dead. I will send my wife here to comfort you." After this he went away.

Shortly after Mrs. Keller came, but no word of sympathy found any response in the bereaved mother's heart. She had again flung herself over the body of her child and remained unconscious to everything about her. When the visitor saw how hopeless it was to help the disconsolate mother, she came to Elсли, who was still weeping bitterly. Taking the child's hand, she said kindly, "Come, Elсли, it is time for you to go home now. We mustn't forget you, either, for our good God in heaven never forgets any of His children. Take comfort in the thought, child, that Nora is sick no longer and will be forever happy."

"If only she had taken me along;" sobbed Elсли, in whom the thought that they would go to heaven together had taken deep root. All hope was over now, she was left behind alone! Weeping noiselessly, she walked by the lady's side till they reached the meadow path. "Here we part, Elсли. Sleep well and come to see us soon. But the

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child did not remove the apron from her eyes. Whispering good-night, she went on her way, her sobs growing more audible as she felt herself lonely and forsaken.

The mother came home with a sad heart and found the children grouped around the aunt. They were more thoughtful and less noisy than usual because the aunt had just told them that Nora had died and gone to heaven. This had impressed each of them in a different way. Fred immediately asked a lot of questions how people died and then came to life again. Emmi was rather appalled at the thought that she had never gone back to see Nora or shown her any kindness. All went to bed quietly, and when the two women sat together late that night, the mother revealed all her sorrows to her sister. How sad for the poor lady to have to lay her only daughter in the grave and not be able to receive a single word of comfort. There was poor Elslie, too, who had to go back to her hard work, which was sure to prove beyond her strength. The child was doubly orphaned now. The close friend through whom she had entered a new life was gone forever, and her brother Fani, on whom she hung so affectionately, was perhaps also gone for good. This last

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matter was a heavy load on the mother's heart, for her own Emmi had instigated the whole thing. One didn't even know if Fani would learn anything useful in his new employment. The aunt had written to an acquaintance in Basle and asked her to seek out the man who employed Fani, and get some idea of his character and the whole situation. The answer which had come was not so very reassuring. The painter had engaged the boy on account of his frank nature and his interesting history. But the painter only wanted a boy to carry his colors and brushes for him, to keep things clean and do various errands. For this Fani received his board, while he had to furnish his clothes himself. That was far from brilliant, and the mother pondered what to do to help him. For the present his parents were quite satisfied with his absence, hoping that he would soon earn enough to provide for himself or possibly even to send some money home. In this way new worries were added to the old one, and Mrs. Keller would have found them hard to bear, had not the aunt with her cheerfulness shown her the pleasant side of everything. She found many comforting words which restored the mother's hope in the future and her confidence in God.

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The following morning Emmi, seeming rather cast down in spirits, begged for permission to lay flowers on Nora's bed. This was gladly given to her as well as Fred, who had also asked for this privilege. The mother meant to go and see Mrs. Stanhope herself later on. The children were admitted by the maid and led into the room where Nora lay still and white on a spotless bed. They had never seen anyone look like that before. The mother knelt by the bed motionless, her face pressed into the covers. Emmi quietly laid down her flowers and seized Nora's hand in farewell. Tears rushed to the girl's eyes. Here lay Nora, cold and silent forever, and while she was alive Emmi had never shown her the slightest kindness. She hadn't wanted to go to this sick child, who had been so lonely and had had so little pleasure. Emmi felt this very much and she still cried when she left with Fred. A while later Mrs. Keller entered the quiet room. The dull pain of the sorrowing woman broke forth now into laments. "Oh, can you now realize how forsaken I am?" she cried amidst a stream of tears. "Why did God take my only child from me. Had He taken all I own, my riches and everything that is mine and left me my child, I should not have com-

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plained. I should have borne privation and every trouble, if only He had spared my child. It is the most terrible thing that could have happened to me, yes, the very hardest. Why must I suffer more than others?"

"Dear Mrs. Stanhope," said the visitor, seizing the bereaved mother's hand, "I understand your great sorrow. But you must also think of your child. Your sorrow will be easier to bear if you realize that God has taken her to Himself, and delivering her from pain, has led her to everlasting bliss. You can't know how dreadful and bitter poverty is and how much poor mothers suffer, who have to compel their children to work in early years. Think how they feel if they can never provide the slightest pleasure for them and instead see them bearing privations with trouble and hard years ahead. Humbly bear your affliction and do not measure it with other people's. The pain which burns in our own hearts always seems the hardest, but God in heaven knows where He leads us."

Mrs. Stanhope had grown a little calmer, but her features still wore an expression of deep despair. After a short silence she told her visitor

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that she was taking Nora home with her in order to keep her near. As she dreaded to take the trip alone, she had sent for Clarissa, her child's faithful nurse, to assist her.

This news was very reassuring to Mrs. Keller, who knew that nobody would be more able to comfort and help the poor mother than this faithful friend, who had known Nora and loved her like a second mother. She therefore went home with a lighter heart, hoping that the forsaken woman would soon find real consolation. Coming home she immediately sought out the aunt, but Emmi, sitting quietly in a corner, said that Fred had taken her off somewhere, probably to show her a little bug. The mother sat down beside her little daughter and related all she could about Nora. Emmi was glad to hear that Nora had been perfectly happy and contented without her company, but she was still sorry she had been purely selfish and had never considered Nora's needs.

Fred, after having found his aunt, had led her to a distant garden-house, for he wanted to talk to her alone. Settling down on the bench he began solemnly: "Aunty, I must tell you something,

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but you mustn't repeat it. I saw Nora today and I can't understand how she could ever wake up and live in heaven, if she is dead."

"Can't you understand it, Fred? I can't either," said the aunt. "God has made many things neither you nor I can understand. But if somebody whose words we can trust promises that we shall live even when the body is dead, we must believe Him. I believe it absolutely, Fred."

"But," he began again with his usual stubbornness, "I always thought people are like animals, and I have often seen dead animals. They never live again. I've observed that often."

The conversation was interrupted at this point because Fred's papa, who had come home, asked the aunt to go with him to admire the splendid cabbages growing in their field. This did not tempt the boy, who went his way silently. The cabbage only promised bitter moments when he would be expected to eat it for his dinner.

CHAPTER IX

A FIRST AND LAST JOURNEY

A LARGE travelling carriage with a lady dressed in black had just passed the doctor's house; it must be Clarissa come to fetch Nora home. The doctor's children stood silently in the garden, thinking what a sad journey this must have been, while the aunt stood near a window upstairs. When the carriage had disappeared around the corner, she beckoned to Fred, who, running up, found her in his room.

“Look, Fred, I am putting things in order for you, and you seem to be keeping many things that have no value. Here is a box with a dead animal which I am going to throw away.” With that she stepped to the window. “But don't, aunty, what are you doing?” cried Fred, flinging himself upon the box. “That is my most beautiful caterpillar and will turn into a butterfly with the most gorgeous pattern on its wings.”

“What do you mean? This animal is dead and doesn't even move. It can't be any good to you.”

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“But aunty, don't you know anything about the caterpillar? How terrible!” cried Fred excitedly, holding on to his box. “You see it has made this cocoon for itself and it only seems dead. But it leaves it behind later, for without our seeing it something inside has remained alive. When the time comes, it leaves this cover and flies away as a totally new creature with gorgeous wings.”

“I can't possibly understand that, Fred,” said the aunt. “How can a worm which first crawls on the ground and then lies like dead, suddenly get beautiful wings and become a different animal? Can you understand how it is it can leave the body with which it crawled around?”

“No, I don't really understand it,” admitted Fred, “but I know that it is so.”

“Fred,” said the aunt seriously, “What if the most inner thing in Nora has remained alive and left the dead body behind? What if she rose to far beautiful heights to live again like a new creature?”

Fred grew thoughtful. “I never thought of that,” he said at last. “I can think differently of Nora now. She must be glad to fly about freely when she was so sick in her first skin. But aren't you glad, aunty, that you understand the story

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of the caterpillar now? Don't you think it is curious?"

"It certainly is, Fred, and shows us that there are many things we can't possibly understand and no scientists can explain. If you should become a scientist some day—and it is quite possible, if you keep on studying so hard—you'll often come upon incomprehensible things. Say humbly to yourself then: 'That is something I can't explain, here is God's hand, whose greatness I admire, for His wisdom is infinitely beyond ours.'"

Fred quite solemnly packed up his caterpillar, gazing at it while it lay quite still with renewed interest in the little creature's strange transformation.

Clarissa had arrived, but Mrs. Stanhope did not seem to get any comfort from her presence. Her sorrow was even heightened by the memories Clarissa conjured up. Clarissa was anxious to hear something about Nora's last hours and death, but found it impossible to speak to the mother about it, so she just sat silently looking into Nora's peaceful face, which spoke a reassuring language. When she heard next day that Nora had passed away in Elslie's arms she sent for

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the little girl. As soon as Elslie came again into the room where she had spent so many happy hours, she began to cry. But when Clarissa kindly took her hand and sat down beside her, the child found great relief in being able to speak of Nora. Elslie's heart opened up for the first time since Nora's departure, as she had not been able to speak a word to anybody until now, and Nora filled her whole thoughts. Forgetting her timidity, she related all Nora's words about the beautiful land they meant to go to together. She could also repeat the whole song, word for word, about the crystal stream and the gleaming flowers. Finally she related how Nora had departed quietly in her arms and how much she hoped soon to go too, as Nora had promised to beg God to let her. Clarissa had listened to Elslie, quite surprised and sincerely touched. The song was her song, which she had taught Nora as a tiny child sitting on her knee. The words about the blessed country also were her own words, and how wonderful besides! Elslie's voice had Nora's soft tones and even the motions of her hands were the same. When every word brought the vanished Nora clearly before Clarissa's eyes, she embraced Elslie and cried from mixed joy and sorrow. Then she

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went to Mrs. Stanhope and repeated eagerly several times, "She seems just like our own dear child, Mrs. Stanhope. It is our own child's voice and Nora's own words. She is exactly like Nora's sister."

Mrs. Stanhope had risen abruptly, listening. As soon as she comprehended Clarissa's meaning, she sadly shook her head and again dropped down by Nora's bedside.

But Clarissa's impression was so strong that Mrs. Stanhope's indifference did not discourage her. She went out and brought in Elсли, who began to cry as soon as she saw Nora. Leading her close to the bed, she laid Elсли's hand in Nora's and turning to the mother she implored: "Look up, Mrs. Stanhope, your daughter has a last message for you." The mother rose and looked for a moment perplexed at the children. Seizing both folded hands in her own, she exclaimed, sobbing: "Yes, Nora, I know. You loved the child, and I won't let her go from me any more." This time Clarissa also wept, but tears of gladness. Once caressing Nora and another time Elсли, she said tenderly, "Yes, yes, we must have a child again to love and care for."

Elсли went home in a dream, only half com-

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prehending what was to become of her. It really seemed as if Nora herself had helped to lead her away, but not to heaven as both had thought.

Nora, covered with flowers, had been laid on her last bed, on which she was to travel home. Faithful Clarissa had attended to everything and now set out to have a talk with Elсли's mother. This did not last long and did not present many difficulties, for Margaret lent a willing ear to all her proposals. Mrs. Stanhope not only intended to adopt the child completely, but also promised to remunerate the parents for her loss. Margaret was openly delighted at this unexpected happiness for Elсли and the advantage it brought to her family. Elсли had not enough health and strength for severe work and, since her long intercourse with Nora, had changed completely. This could be noticed from the behavior of her little brother, who shrieked incessantly now, enough to make one deaf. Before, Elсли had always been able to quiet him, while now Margaret preferred to put him in his cradle. Margaret and Clarissa parted in complete harmony and the latter promised to let Elсли come back home on a visit every year.

Very shortly it was known in the village that the rich Mrs. Stanhope had adopted Elсли and

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was taking her to her beautiful home on the Rhine. This news caused great excitement. Whenever two people met, Elsli's great good fortune was discussed. In school the children could not sit still, they were so thrilled. Apparently they expected something unheard-of to happen besides. Even Mr. Bickel and his wife were led to an unusual step. Taking up his stick he said to his wife one day, "Come, wife, we must pay Mrs. Stanhope a call, for she must see that the child has decent relatives. She might also need some advice concerning Elsli, and I should be just the man to give it. It might even be possible she might invite us to her place, and I hear that there are many factories in her neighborhood. Something might be done for our business through her." But Mr. Bickel had been obliged to put down his cane again. It was not possible for his wife to get ready so quickly for such an important visit.

Thankfulness over the event reigned in the doctor's home. Mother and aunt were full of gladness and gratitude that the delicate child had fallen into such splendid hands and was to be so happy. A new life lay before her and much could be made of the adaptable little girl. They talked

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about it over and over again, while the children thought of nothing else.

Oscar went about deeply meditating how he could make use of the event for his own plans, quite unhappy that the beautiful embroidered flag had been laid aside for the present.

Emmi also went about lost in thought, and whenever the sly Fred passed her he would say, "She certainly is planning something." He himself was making a long list of all the bugs, caterpillars and snails that were found near the Rhine, and in order to make everything very clear he always added the Latin name.

That same evening, Elсли, barely visible, sat on the long bench at home. Hans was on her lap, while Hiri and Rudi sat as close to her as possible, as usual. As it was the last evening she would spend with them for many months, she bore it patiently.

Elсли knew what was before her and she was glad. Good old Clarissa had so completely won her heart that she felt towards her as towards a mother. The child could talk to the old woman as she had never before been able to talk to anyone except Nora. Though Mrs. Stanhope still frightened her a little, she realized that the lady

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was Nora's mother and that she had always been very good to her. Of course not in the same way as old Clarissa—Elsli couldn't quite picture her future life to herself and she often felt a little frightened. She wondered what her life so far from home would be like and if she would be able to do everything that was expected of her. However, the firm belief that Nora was leading her thither filled her with hope and gladness. A bit of sorrow, though, filled her heart now that she was leaving. She would be so far from Fani and might not see him for years. Elsli, lost in thought, had not been conscious of the youngest boy's impatience, shown by kicking his arms and legs. Just then Emmi rushed into the room.

"Elsli," she called from the door already, "I must tell you something important before you leave tomorrow. Put Hans down and come quickly with me."

"He'll cry," objected Elsli, and in fact he had begun at once. But this did not bother Emmi. Setting Hans firmly on the ground, she drew Elsli with her to the big apple-tree behind the house.

"Here, Elsli, you must take this with you," said Emmi, giving her friend a large roll of

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paper. I'll explain it to you now. You see I found out that you go to Basle on your trip."

"Do you think so?" Elсли interrupted with glowing eyes.

"Yes, yes, I am sure," continued Emmi, "And you must tell good old Clarissa that Fani is in Basle and that you would like to say good-bye to him. Of course you can't mention it to Mrs. Stanhope, because she is so sad now and wouldn't listen. But Clarissa won't mind going with you and then you must give Fani this. I send him my love besides. Here is his address."

"Oh, Emmi, I am so glad you told me that," said the child with joyfully shining eyes. "Do you really think I could ask her?"

"You must! Just think how glad Fani will be to see you. Promise me you'll do it—"

Elsli had no opportunity to give her promise, for Oscar had come towards her. Seizing her hand, he cried hastily, "Oh, I have been looking for you everywhere. I am so glad to find you at last, Elсли. Come with me, I must tell you something." With this he pulled Elсли to the hazelnut hedge on the other side of the house. Here he stopped. Emmi had not followed, finding it wiser not to provoke Oscar further. She had already provoked his wrath enough by gathering together

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all the pencils in the house she had been able to find, as well as the white paper given to them all for various purposes.

“Listen, Elсли,” said Oscar insistently. “I must explain something very important to you. You see, you are going to a new country where everything in the beginning will seem strange to you. But there may be other people there from Switzerland and you can found a patriotic society. You can meet together every week and can speak about your beloved homeland.”

“Yes, but I won’t know what to speak about, I am sure,” said Elсли a little scared.

“That doesn’t matter, the others can do the talking,” Oscar continued with eagerness. “But now comes the most important thing. Next summer when you come home again you must settle on a place of meeting with the other members who are coming, too. Then we’ll have an inauguration feast. Crowds will come from all sides and I’ll appear with a gorgeous flag and we’ll form a huge procession. You must write to me as soon as your society is founded.”

“Yes, I will,” said Elсли a little doubtfully, for she did not quite know who was to found the society. But no further questions were allowed. Fred just then stormed in upon her with a large

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sheet of paper in his hand. Behind him came Riki, breathing hard. Oscar went his way.

“Elsli, come and read this,” cried Fred, “You’ll find all these wonderful caterpillars, scarce bugs and funny snails near the Rhine. All you need to do is to creep under the hedges when you take walks and dig into the ground. Then the little fellows will come out. Please send me all the specimens you can catch, won’t you? I’ll promise to send you something, too. You can put them all in your pocket till you come home from your walk. Just do like me; put your hand on top of your pocket so they can’t crawl out.” Here Fred spread out his hands as if his pockets were full of insects.

Riki shuddered all over.

Elsli was anxious to do Fred that favor, but the commission was no clearer to her than Oscar’s had been. “I’d love to do it, Fred, but how can I recognize them by their names?”

That was a clear drawback, and Fred, conscious of it, decided not to let it hinder him. He looked at his sheet. Couldn’t he draw or paint a picture of every animal? Of course.

“I’ll come again tomorrow before you leave,” he cried, rushing away.

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Riki, who had had to pay so dearly for her last lesson, had given up shrieking every time Fred came near her with a specimen. But she closely watched her brother's movements, forestalling any green-eyed frog that might jump at her. Riki could not be without Fred and always ran after him everywhere. When he had gone, the little girl came close to Elсли. "Please don't send him those terrible snails and bugs alive," she supplicated. "You must send them stuffed, Elсли."

At that moment Feklitus arrived in his Sunday clothes, while Elсли's mother's voice came from the house: "I just wonder, Elсли, if you are ever coming in again," she cried, discouraged with Hans, who had kept up his loud yells ever since Elсли had gone out.

Riki ran off and Feklitus had grasped Elсли's arm. "I must call on the rich lady on Oak Ridge and tell her I am your cousin and that we want to visit you on the Rhine," he growled. "But I am too embarrassed to go alone. You must go with me."

"Don't you hear? I have to go to mother. Let me go, I can't go with you," said Elсли, trying to free herself.

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“But you must,” cried Feklitus. Pulling her along against her will, he set out.

When first Oscar, then Emmi, came home, followed by Fred and Riki, they were met on the steps of the house by Kathy. Waving her hand at them she cried, “Hush, hush, don't make such a noise. Mrs. Stanhope is in there saying good-bye.”

Elsli was so overcome by all these messages and the recent impressions that she did not close her eyes all night and left in a perfect dream the next morning with the two ladies. When they were driving through the quiet country-side a large folded sheet of paper, weighted down with a stone, flew into the carriage.

“Good-bye, Elsli, I wish I could go, too,” came from quite near. It was Fred who had only finished his last drawing that same morning and was now handing her the finished sheet.

This last greeting brought tears to Elsli's eyes. She realized clearly that she was going far, far away from home. Good Clarissa had observed this. Kindly taking the child's hand in hers, she made her feel she was leaving at a mother's side.

For the next ten days the four children's thoughts were still occupied with the happenings

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of the last weeks, from Nora's arrival to Elсли's journey. Everything was discussed thoroughly, and when they were done they began again at the beginning. On the tenth day came a long letter from Elсли which caused great excitement. Mother and aunt were just as eager as the children to hear the news. But as it was addressed to Emmi, she got hold of it and cried, "I'll read it aloud to you all. It's eight pages long!" Then she began:

Lindenthalde-on-the-Rhine,
28 September 18..

Dearest Friend:—

I thank you a thousand times for the good advice you gave me. If you hadn't told me I couldn't ever have mentioned Fani to Mrs. Stanhope.

But I must begin at the beginning. After Fred said good-bye to me and I drove away, I had to cry a little. But Aunt Clarissa—that's the way I may call her—was so good and kind to me. She said I must always tell her everything that made me sad and she would help me bear it. Mrs. Stanhope had shut her eyes and lay quietly in a corner of the carriage, so thinking she was asleep, I decided to tell her about Fani. Aunt Clarissa didn't even know I had a brother, you see. When I told her how suddenly he had left us and how long it was since I had seen him, she promised to take me to him that same day, as we were spend-

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ing the night at Basle. She was perfectly sure Mrs. Stanhope would let us. In Basle we went to the biggest inn I ever saw in all my life. I could hardly eat, I was so excited about seeing Fani. It was three o'clock, right after lunch, when Aunt Clarissa asked Mrs. Stanhope if she minded our going to see my brother. As she did not want to be left alone, she came with us. We went across a large bridge over the Rhine and then a whole lot further. After a while we came to small houses, and when we inquired for a painter named Schilz we found we were standing right before his house. Mrs. Stanhope opened the door and stepped into the workshop and we followed. Fani gave a loud cry of joy, ran straight towards Mrs. Stanhope, and embracing her violently, began to cry. You see he had been dreadfully homesick and was so glad to see somebody from home. When he saw me, he was still more delighted. In his joy he came right back to Mrs. Stanhope, not a bit embarrassed. But you know Fani never was embarrassed and always could say everything right out. He clutched Mrs. Stanhope's hand over and over again and cried: "Oh, I am so glad to see somebody from home!" You have no idea how friendly Mrs. Stanhope was. In the end she asked him to call his master as she wished to speak with him. She went outside with the painter and when she came back she said to Fani, "Would you like to come and live with us and your sister!" I can't tell you how I felt at that moment. First I could hardly

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breathe, I was so happy, and then I thought I couldn't have heard right. But Fani gave a glad shout and taking Mrs. Stanhope's hand supplicated her with his eyes. He promised to work as hard as he knew how to satisfy her, if only he could come along. Mrs. Stanhope said, "You are coming with us," telling him to meet us at the station next morning at nine o'clock. Oh, what news for Fani and me! On the way back to the inn Mrs. Stanhope said to Clarissa, "Did you notice the resemblance? Doesn't he look at one with his large brown eyes just like Philo?" Aunt Clarissa, glad over this discovery, said that she had not quite known why she had taken to Fani at once. You see Philo was Nora's brother. That evening Mrs. Stanhope mentioned their resemblance several times again, and it was the first time she really talked a little. When I woke up next morning, I couldn't quite believe that Fani was coming with us; it seemed too great a happiness. At breakfast Mrs. Stanhope immediately spoke again of the resemblance between Fani and her own Philo and expressed her joy at taking the boy along. Aren't you surprised Mrs. Stanhope said that? As soon as we reached the station Fani immediately met us. He had gone there at six o'clock, three hours ahead of time, because he couldn't wait. Mrs. Stanhope laughed a little, the first time on our whole trip, and Fani couldn't get over his happiness. Every time we stopped at a station and something had to be fetched, Mrs. Stanhope held back Clarissa, who

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was ready to go. "No, no, we have an escort now, he can do it all." She would explain to Fani how to do it and you should have seen how he flew about and attended to everything. He'd always look at Mrs. Stanhope to see if she was satisfied, and one could easily see how pleased she was. It was night before we got out again. Mrs. Stanhope said that this was Mainz-on-the-Rhine and that we would see the river properly tomorrow. And just think! the next day we went on the most beautiful steamboat anybody has ever seen. Fani was beside himself with delight over the wonderful boat, and Mrs. Stanhope let him run around and see and examine everything. I didn't see him sometimes for a whole hour. At last he came and fetched some of your pencils and paper. He wanted to draw everything so he could always remember the fine ship. He thanks you very much for your lovely present. That evening when we left the boat, a large coach was at the station for us and a carriage besides. You see Nora was always with us. For half an hour we drove in a carriage till we came to a house in the middle of a large garden with many trees. This is Mrs. Stanhope's home. Getting out of the carriage Fani asked me, "Do you think I'll have to work in the big garden or in the stable?" I couldn't tell him, because I didn't know where I was to work myself. But everything was entirely different from what we had imagined. The first three days Mrs. Stanhope was so sad we didn't see her at all, but Aunt Clarissa was

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very good to us. She led us around the big garden and showed us everything, also where Philo was buried under a little white cross with his name on it. We three had our meals together: there was nobody else. Then Nora was buried beside her brother under the large linden trees. Aunt Clarissa said Mrs. Stanhope did not come yet because she was sad to see her home again without Nora. But on the fourth day she came to the table and was very friendly, telling us our work was to begin now. How surprised Fani and I were when we found out what it was. Yes, and every evening we look forward to next day, we enjoy everything so much. What do you think our work is? You will hardly believe it and yet it is true. None at all! We have lessons all morning and are allowed to learn a lot of things. At nine o'clock a teacher comes and stays till one and we two have lessons all alone. Of course Fani is much quicker than I am, but the teacher is very patient and always says, "You must be very brave and work hard in order to catch up with your brother." I'll never have to be afraid any more of not knowing my lessons and being ashamed of the children in school. It always is one o'clock so soon that we can hardly believe it and we are glad to have the lessons again next day. After dinner we go out to the garden. Mrs. Stanhope always goes with Fani and he has to tell her about the lessons and also what he wants to learn and study. Mrs. Stanhope loves him of course much more than me, for you know how he

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is. He can express himself so well and keeps on saying how happy he is all the time. He does it every time as if he only just thought of it and thanks her a thousand times again and again. When he looks up at her so full of delight while holding her hand, she is really as kind as she used to be to Nora. I can't do like Fani and can't say aloud what is in my heart, so I am afraid Mrs. Stanhope doesn't think I am as grateful. She is never as kind to me as to him and I can't quite understand it. But Aunt Clarissa is. When we come from the garden, I go to her room and learn to do nice work, also pretty embroideries like you. Tell Oscar that if I can't find any members for our society I can embroider him a beautiful flag. Aunt Clarissa already knows about it. He only needs to write me the motto. Meanwhile Fani has drawing lessons in another room for which a teacher comes for two hours every day. Mrs. Stanhope is usually there with him because she is delighted how quickly he can learn and what nice things he can draw already.

Afterwards Fani and I go out into the garden alone and we can run about everywhere. In all the corners are beautiful stone benches and white marble figures and it is just splendid. The garden is very big and goes way down to the Rhine, where fine linden trees grow. It is more beautiful than any place in the whole world. Tell Fred that I always watch out for beetles, but I don't seem to catch them. But he mustn't be angry, because I might catch one after a while. After

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supper Aunt Clarissa sits down at the piano and we sing Nora's song and a few others she has taught me. Fani usually sits in the other room and draws some more, but if he sings with us it sounds much better. Then Mrs. Stanhope usually comes in to listen. In the end we do our lessons. The day passes more quickly than I can say, and Fani and I hate to go to bed. I am hardly tired any more and it really is so wonderful to live here, and Fani and I are so happy! When we come to the table Clarissa usually says, "Thank the good God we have children at our meals again." When she said so yesterday Mrs. Stanhope answered, "I am sure you would be happier still if we had the whole house full of children." And Aunt Clarissa answered, "There could never be too many for me." Just listen to what Mrs. Stanhope said then: "I know what we'll do. We must invite their Swiss friends, the doctor's children, to come here next year, and you can take especial charge of little Riki." Fani gave a loud shout of delight, while I couldn't say a word and couldn't even swallow. Clarissa was so happy, too, that she clapped her hands and exclaimed, "Elsli must quickly write and ask them. This mustn't escape us." Then she added, "That is a wonderful thought, Mrs. Stanhope, it's a wonderful thought! Fani and I ran all over the garden yesterday looking at everything we must show you when you come: the beautiful marble figures, the little benches near the shrubberies, and the big high linden

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trees where one can sit quietly hidden under the long, long branches and watch the Rhine. I am also glad about the beetles. Fred can catch them all himself then. Fani will soon write you a long letter, too, and another one to Oscar. But first he wants to finish a little drawing of the lindens and the little spot there as a present for you.

We send our love to everybody in your house and also to my mother and father and the little boys. Fani sends his special love to you.

Your faithful friend,

ELSLI.

When the letter was finished a jubilation broke out which seemed to be without end. What news for the whole family and what glorious prospects! Mother and aunt also were overcome by joy and thankfulness that their anxiety about Fani was over and that God had opened such a splendid life for the two children they had been so concerned about.

It is hard to tell which of the children is happiest at the prospect of their journey. All four are so filled with the thought they can hardly talk of anything else. Each is planning and thinking it all out. Oscar sees before him crowds of Swiss patriots whom he wants to draw into a new society founded by him and Fani. He also looks

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forward to that second flag which is to make this festival very brilliant. Restlessly he is already looking through all the works of literature in order to find a motto which can fitly interpret the greatness of the coming feast. Should any child reading this story send him a pretty verse, he would be very grateful and choose the best. Emmi is in a constant fever of joy, for she is sure Fani is on the way to becoming a famous painter. If Mrs. Stanhope is so fond of him he'll be able to choose his own profession. But Emmi can hardly wait her meeting with Fani, whom she means to advise thoroughly for his future. Fred has his hands full. He already sees such an addition to his collection of insects that he must make provision for it. The aunt had to give her promise that every box, big or little, which is not needed in the house, may be brought into his room, where a considerable quantity is already stacked up. Like Oscar, he would like to send a wish broadcast into the world to bring him boxes from everywhere. His mother, however, is not of the same opinion, for the friendly contributions might become too great for the room they have. For the first time in her life Riki can look forward to a great pleasure without a secret dread.

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Till now all her pleasures had been shared with Fred, but behind nearly all something terrible had lurked, either crawling out suddenly or jumping at her. Riki knows now she is to come under good Clarissa's special protection. This will mean that she can enjoy everything in the wonderful house and garden without any danger.

Fani and Elsi get happier every day and feel more at home in their beautiful newsurroundings. They only wish that the time will soon come for their dear friends to arrive, when they can share all these delights with them.

Good Clarissa takes care that Fani and Elsi do not forget God, who has brought them to such good friends. She loves to lead them both to the spot where Nora and Philo are buried and to remind them how unexpectedly life can change pain into joy, as their own experience has shown them; also that joy can turn into sorrow just as quickly and the shadow of death can fall in the midst of sunshine. Only those can be happy who trust in God, who holds everything in His hands and can lead us all to perfect happiness.

CHAPTER X

THE NEW HOME

WINTER was over and the beautiful roses had again crept high up on the lovely country house on the Rhine. All the garden beds were full of blooming roses, which gleamed in the bright sunshine and spread their perfume over everything. Fani and Elсли were wandering down the white gravel path from the splashing fountain to the linden trees near the river, drinking in the delicious perfumes.

“Do you know, Elсли, from what Mrs. Stanhope’s house has its name?” asked Fani, pausing at a flower-bed and watching some butterflies flitting from one rose to another and then rising up into the air.

“Yes, I do, Fani,” replied Elсли. “It is called Rose Hall because so many roses bloom here.”

“You are right. But what is there so sad about it?” asked Fani reproachfully. “Why do you look so unhappy, Elсли? You certainly have no reason. Mrs. Stanhope sees it, too, and I don’t think she likes it. She must think you

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dreadfully ungrateful for everything she is doing. Don't you realize how happy we are here compared with home?"

"Yes, I know and I don't forget it for a moment. I'd love to show Mrs. Stanhope how grateful I am," Elсли replied. "But you see, Fani, Aunt Clarissa said that if we are happy and have everything we need in plenty, we should think of those who are poor and miserable and should try to help them. I often think of that, for I know what it feels like. I really ought to do something for somebody and give away some of the things we get."

"But Elсли, why should you?" cried Fani. "There is no one who needs it and the servants live like masters here. Didn't you see the hat that Lina, the chambermaid, wears when she goes out, with a red and yellow shawl like Mrs. Bickel's? And the cook has such red cheeks one can see she has always enough to eat; and the coachman wears leather gloves for driving."

"Yes, but you see, Fani," Elсли began again, "we are allowed to be in the garden and can do what we like so much that I always think we should work for somebody. I might make stockings for the boys at home if I had some wool. But

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I can't really ask for that, as we get so many things already."

"Of course you mustn't do it, Elсли. What are you thinking of?" cried Fani. "You mustn't forget, either, how many clothes and things Mrs. Stanhope sends to mother. Last week a huge package went off, don't you remember?"

"Yes, I remember quite well, and others have gone before," Elсли agreed. "I only mean I should do something for somebody who is unhappy."

"But you must enjoy yourself, you know the doctor told you to. He doesn't want you to sit so much over your books and study all the time, and you must be out in the fresh air a lot. Come, Elсли, let's walk round the large rose-bed so you can breathe in the lovely perfume. Oh, how strong it is! One can notice it even here."

Fani, taking Elсли's hand in his, began to run up the path again. But she gently held him back.

"I can't run as well as you, Fani," she said, breathing hard. "I'd like to go and sit down on the bench under the lindens."

"Can you see now," observed Fani, turning about and slowly going down to the lindens,

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“how quickly you tire? It is a good thing we are allowed to be out in the garden a great deal. Come, it's lovely here. Doesn't it smell wonderfully, too?” He was sitting down and comfortably leaning back against the trunk of the old tree, whose top was in flower and showered its fragrance over the children. The waves of the river below them flowed gently on, bathing the tips of the low-drooping branches.

“Oh, how wonderful it is here! Doesn't it make you feel so well you'd like to shout, Elslī?” asked Fani.

“Oh, yes,” affirmed Elslī, but her pale face did not glow with joy like Fani's. “When I sit here I always think of Nora. You can see the evening sky so well from here, and that makes me remember the beautiful evening when she went away. The whole sky was golden, as if it stood open and one could look inside. Everything gleamed and sparkled, from the golden sun to the crystal stream. Whenever we have a bright evening and I can see the rosy clouds over there, I always feel as if Nora looked down and beckoned to me. I should love to go to her.”

Fani jumped up at these words, exclaiming violently, “How can you talk that way, Elslī?”

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We have a more beautiful life than anybody on earth and here you talk as if it were nothing and you'd rather go away and die. I am sure I shouldn't want to, and you shouldn't either. Be sure never to say such a thing before Mrs. Stanhope or she might send us both home again, and you know what that would be like. She often talks of the future and one can see she means to have us always with her. Just imagine how wonderful it will be to be here all our lives! I'll be a gentleman and you a lady just like Mrs. Stanhope, and then——”

“Oh, Fani, you frighten me still more,” Elсли interrupted him mournfully. “I notice every day that I am not a bit the way Mrs. Stanhope wants me to be; I am afraid I'll never suit her and I am sure she can't ever love me. I feel it quite clearly and it makes me ashamed. I'd like to be different but I can't help it.”

Fani, who had settled down again, jumped up once more at these words. “But, Elсли, how can you imagine such things?” he cried reproachfully, “and why do you do it? It's no fun and you should remember all the beautiful times we have and all our pleasures.”

“I don't do it on purpose and I'd like never to

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do so again," replied Elсли apologetically. "But you see, whenever I want to be very happy, something very sad suddenly seems to fill my mind and that makes me unhappy. I often see things you don't even notice and I can't forget them. It was that way today."

"What have you seen that I didn't notice?" asked Fani, surprised.

"Twice already while taking our evening walk we met a man with a heavy pickaxe on his shoulder. He went by yesterday and you didn't see him because you were talking to Mrs. Stanhope. The man always gazes at the ground and looks just like father when he came home tired and would say, 'We don't seem to pull through, however hard I work. If only I don't have to make debts.' I was always so afraid then that he would have to make some. I am sure that man has troubles like father and I have sometimes wanted to walk after him. If I knew where he lives, I might do something for him and help a little."

"You mustn't do it, you mustn't!" cried Fani, frightened. "Don't you remember that Mrs. Stanhope has forbidden us, when we first came here, to go into people's houses we didn't

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know. She has also forbidden us to speak to people the way we did at home. You must never follow him or talk to him. Please remember and don't ever do it. Otherwise Mrs. Stanhope might be dreadfully angry."

Elsli meditated a while before saying again, "I don't think Mrs. Stanhope meant that. She doesn't like it if people ask us where we came from and what our home was like. A poor man who has troubles is something entirely different. I am sure she never meant such people."

"Oh, well, we can't be so particular," Fani impatiently interrupted. "You must obey, anyhow, and not run into strangers' houses. Let's talk of something else, now, for that is so tiresome. Come, I'll show you something."

The children sat with their heads attentively bent over a careful little landscape which Fani had taken from his pocket. It gleamed in the brightest colors and Elsli was lost in contemplation of it.

"Do you recognize it?" asked Fani.

"Oh, yes, I knew it the first moment," Elsli assured him. "It is Rose Hall. Here are the wonderful roses and here the lindens. They are beautifully done, Fani. You can paint so well.

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Won't Emmi be astonished when she comes? She would never think that you could do such beautiful pictures already."

"I am so glad she is coming," cried Fani with joyful eyes. "You see, Elсли, I can't talk about my love of painting to anybody as I can to her. She understands it so well and would like me to be a painter nearly as much as I want to myself."

"Do you still want to become a painter?" asked Elсли, astonished.

"Every day more so and especially after my drawing lessons," Fani assured her. "But I don't say anything more about it, because I see that Mrs. Stanhope doesn't wish it. I think she wants to keep us with her all her life, as if we were her own children; I know that from several things she has said. Of course that is only if we don't do something she doesn't like, for which she might want to send us away. And of course we mustn't do that. I have mentioned several times already that I'd like to become a painter, but she always said that that was a profession for people who wanted to live in foreign countries and far from home. As I could draw and paint as much as I wished here I needn't make a profession of

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it, for I mustn't leave her. That shows you that she never wants us to go away."

Elsli shook her head. "I don't know, Fani, I don't quite feel at home in this beautiful house. I know you can't understand it, but I feel as if we were still traveling and I had to go still further."

"Don't begin with that old story again!" cried Fani, quite provoked, for he didn't like these curious doubts.

Meanwhile the time had come for them to go in, and hand-in-hand they wandered up the white gravel-path by the fragrant roses. Here they entered the large stone hall which stood open towards the garden side.

CHAPTER XI

THE JOURNEY

IN THE doctor's house in Buchberg unusual excitement reigned. It was the month of June, the time set for the longed-for journey to the Rhine. Just one more day and they would be there. The large trunk was ready and it was now only a question of getting ready the hand luggage. This work proved by far the hardest task for both mother and aunt. It seemed also to mean much exertion on the part of the children, for the three eldest flew up and down stairs with the most peculiar objects. The mother and aunt had decided what was to be taken in the large trunk, and the children's turn had come to choose the rest. The firm assurance had been given, however, that everything useless would be left behind. But the three had their own notions about what was useful. Fred arrived at his aunt's side with eight solid boxes under his arm, each wound about with such heavy string that it could have safely stood a journey into the interior of India. Meanwhile Emmi had come to her mother with a huge roll of paper under one arm

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and a large package she could barely hold under the other.

“No, Fred, we can’t take them,” said the aunt. “How could we possibly pack these eight boxes in this little bag and for what? You couldn’t possibly need any of these things for your visit.”

“But, aunty, six of them are full of live creatures which I must take,” Fred objected. “How can they remain alive without food and constant care? Just think of that, aunty. And I need the others for comparison with those I shall find on the Rhine. Maybe we can manage if we try very hard, or perhaps I can just take the six with the live ones.”

“It is impossible, Fred, and useless, too. Just carry them all back to your room,” said the aunt with kindness. “Don’t worry, Fred, I’ll feed them and look after them till you come back. You must leave the dead ones, too. If you ever want to know which specimens you have, just write and ask me. I’ll answer you to the best of my knowledge.”

The mother had stood quite aghast at the two huge objects Emmi expected to take in her suit-case.

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“What in the world is in this roll, Emmi? It would even have been too large for the trunk. What are you thinking of, Emmi?” inquired the mother.

“Oh, mamma, perhaps we can tie it on top of my bag. I can carry it myself, for I must have it,” said Emmi, concerned. “I have lovely pictures here that Fani would like to copy. He liked them so much and wrote to me that he still thinks of the lovely pictures we had in school and of those we once got for Christmas. I packed all of ours up with several our teacher loaned me on condition that I would bring them back safely. Fani would just love to have them.”

“It is absolutely useless, Emmi,” the mother exclaimed. “Just think! Fani has his own drawing teacher now, who chooses his own subjects for the boy and it is foolish to take him any others. And what have you in this enormous package?”

“I know it is a little large, mamma,” said Emmi, discouraged, “but I thought I could take it on my lap. Oh, I simply must have that, mamma: It is the book I got for Christmas, ‘Lives of Famous Artists,’ which I want to take to Fani to read. I tied my two petticoats round

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it so I won't spoil the beautiful binding, also my raincoat and my little table cover and an oilcloth."

"You have rather unfortunate ideas, Emmi," sighed the mother. "We can never be done in time if you all act that way. Come! If we take the wrappings from the book we may find room for it. But where is the time to come from for everything? We have not packed a single object yet that you really need, despite the long time we have had for preparations. Your aunt and I have to stand around without getting anything accomplished, while the time is passing."

"For heaven's sake, Oscar, what are you dragging in now?" cried the aunt, perplexed.

With considerable noise Oscar was pulling a drum along the ground, while in one hand he held a large bell and in the other a hand-harmonica and a flute.

"My dear Oscar!" exclaimed the aunt, "your own reason must tell you that there is no room here for your drum. What is your object in taking these instruments, I should like to know? Mrs. Stanhope will be very much delighted with such music, I am sure."

"It is not for the house, aunty, it's for a feast in the open," explained Oscar. "I only took

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Fred's little drum, not my big one. Maybe it will go in after all." But after measuring the drum, Oscar himself realized the impossibility of his scheme. The bell also had to be put aside. Oscar complained loudly, as he was going to call together the guests at the feast with the bell.

"Who owns this flute?" asked the aunt in surprise. "It seems a very nice one."

"It belongs to Feklitus; he takes flute lessons now," Oscar informed her. "He wants to lend me the flute, because he hates to play it, and when it's gone he can't have lessons."

Both women lost no time in packing up the instrument loaned without anybody's permission. After Fred had come again with an assortment of curious objects, Kathy, sticking her head through the doorway, cried, "Mrs. Bickel wants to see you, Ma'am."

"The time is not very well chosen," said the lady of the house with a sigh. "I suppose I have to go and leave everything on your shoulders again as usual," she continued, turning towards her sister. "And you, too, children, try to bring things you will need and not a thousand silly ones." Then she went to the parlor to receive her guest. One could see from Mrs. Bickel's appearance that she thought the occasion important.

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She had the red and yellow shawl round her shoulders, and the largest white feather hat the doctor's wife had ever seen.

When the two women sat opposite each other and the mother was hoping Mrs. Bickel would soon mention her errand, the visitor began to remark about the weather. Next she mentioned the bad state of the cherry trees this season, and then she began to speak of the apple trees. The mother was on pins and needles, worrying about all the things still left undone. Suddenly remembering the flute, she asked if Oscar could really borrow it from Feklitus. This brought Mrs. Bickel to her own affairs and she disclosed her husband's and her intention of having Feklitus make the Rhine journey also. This would give the boy an opportunity to play the flute for Mrs. Stanhope, especially as none of the doctor's children could make any music. It would be very pleasant for all the children to be together and the people down there would see that the doctor's children had other friends beside the two Mrs. Stanhope had adopted. The doctor's wife interrupted the speech at this point, declaring that nobody need interfere. Mrs. Stanhope herself knew very well that Fani and Elsli were her own children's dearest friends.

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She also asked her visitor if it was their intention to let Feklitus make the journey with her children. Mrs. Bickel retorted proudly that she would never do that. Mrs. Stanhope would, of course, wish to invite Feklitus to her house as a relative of Fani and Elsi, and she could never accept such an invitation, which would make it seem as if one couldn't pay. She would be much obliged if Oscar would write soon after his arrival how the journey should be made and what was the first and best hotel in the neighborhood. Here her son could stop and take his meals, spending all his time with his friends. Oscar would surely fetch him from the station and take him to the hotel. Mr. Bickel intended to bring his son home himself, as he was planning a Rhine journey, too. This would give him an opportunity to pay a polite call on his relatives.

The lady of the house had patiently listened to this long recital, while her thoughts frequently strayed to the other room. How could the aunt possibly get through with so much work alone?

She promised to do everything Mrs. Bickel wished and hoped that the visit was at an end at last. But no, Mrs. Bickel still wanted some advice about Feklitus's outfit for the journey.

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Would six new suits suffice? Would it not be well to take a whole trunkful of new shirts? As things were so likely to be ruined away from home, he would then not need to send his shirts to a careless laundress. Mrs. Keller declared she was not sending such quantities and Mrs. Bickel would have to act according to her own ideas.

It was growing dark when the visitor departed and the mother was free at last to go to her family again. The packing was done and the aunt had disappeared with Oscar, leaving the others in a state of anger, for all had something special to tell their aunt. Riki had been found too young to go along and was quite overcome at the sight of all these preparations. In compensation Riki was to have such delights at home that she had been quite satisfied and preferred it to such an uncertain trip without either mother or aunt. But the present preparations had completely upset her. Sitting on the floor between the suitcases and bags, she cried louder and louder from disappointment, while Emmi scolded her and Fred began to sing:

“Baby Riki and Baby Hans
Resemble each other completely.”

The mother calmed them all, drew Riki from

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the floor, and asked the others to sit beside her. She had a quiet hour to spend with them this last evening before the journey, and Emmi and Fred were thus given an opportunity to discuss several important points.

When Riki saw how many doubts they both had about their behavior and manners in the distant country they were going to, she was consoled for having to stay at home. The prospects of many walks with her mother and aunt alone and the expectation of having the lion's share in all the treats at home was a great comfort and made her glad. After all, the journey was an uncertain matter.

Oscar had led his aunt to a garret room, where stood some unused beds and where no one ever entered. As he had an important discussion before him, which was not to be interrupted, he took the precaution to bolt the door. To his public request for mottoes he had received thirty-five, which had brought him into a great state of uncertainty. Each one seemed better than the last.

But a choice had to be made, and the aunt must help him to decide. It was not the first time this matter had been discussed between them; on the contrary, at least ten conversations

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had taken place already. But among the best three it was so hard to choose, especially as Oscar fancied the one his aunt did not approve of. He therefore was eager to bring her round to his opinion.

“You see, aunty,” he began as soon as they were safe, “I’ll recite you all three once more and you must say which sounds best. First comes the one you like:

‘The drums are beating, the banners wave,
Come join our happy festival!
Then give a cheer for all good folk
And for those here, the best of all!’”

“It is a nice verse, but as I couldn’t pack the drum I can’t use that one.”

“There must be some drums on the Rhine; Fani might even own one,” suggested the aunt, “and the verse otherwise suits your purpose. I forget the second one again. Say it once more.”

“It goes like this,” and Oscar began to declaim:

“‘A festival! Oh, come and see,
Ye Switzers come right loyally!
Whatever be your occupation,
Oh, leave it for this glad occasion!’”

“I think that one is nicer still. Don’t you think it’s very nice, aunty?”

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“Yes, and it would suit your feast, but it is too long for Elslie to embroider.”

“Yes, that’s just why it doesn’t go,” cried Oscar, relieved. “But hear the last one now, so short and splendid:

‘Now forward one and forward all
Let freedom’s word be spoken!
We’ll fight until the tyrants fall
And all the chains are broken.’”

“Did you listen, aunty?”

“Yes, it sounds very grand, but it has no sense,” said the woman firmly. “I don’t know where the tyrants are you mean to vanquish. Take my advice and put this verse aside, Oscar. Either take the first or another one from the many you still have.”

Oscar grew more excited. He wanted his aunt to agree with him, and the time was getting short. He could never give up his verse, and therefore his aunt must be made to approve.

“But aunty,” he insisted, “you know that there have been tyrants and there might be some again. Then the verse would fit so well: you must see that yourself.”

The aunt could give no further opinion, as a loud rattling and knocking on the door put an

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end to their conversation. Emmi and Fred, knowing each other's tricks, after having looked in vain for the two missing ones, had slipped upstairs. The bolted door confirmed their suspicions.

Emmi shrieked through the keyhole, "Aunty, aunty, please come quickly! Papa is home and supper is ready. Mamma sent us here to get you."

And Fred as noisily added, "Come out, Oscar! Papa has asked for you."

Everything was over; the aunt escaped and Oscar had to follow.

Early next morning when the carriage was outside and the horses were being harnessed, the father entered the room where the two women were pressing the children's traveling clothes.

"I must say good-bye, as I won't see you later," he said, "for my patients are waiting. Listen, Oscar, I have a word to say to you. Be cautious and don't begin to found your clubs and societies the way you seem to do here. Remember you are going far from home. If you do anything very silly here, everybody knows you and people just say, 'He's the doctor's boy and his father can get him out of his scrape.' Down there you are on your own responsibility, and you

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had better not start anything that might have unpleasant consequences, either for yourself or those you live with. I hope you don't want to make us feel ashamed of you before Mrs. Stanhope. You are old enough to understand what I mean, So be sensible and remember. Good-bye, my boy, and you, too, Emmi, and you, Fred. Have a good time and behave yourselves." With this the father shook all the outstretched hands and went his way.

Emmi was led to another part of the room by her mother. The enormous roll and the book, wished for feverishly at Christmas, which had to go along, had wakened all kinds of misgivings in the mother's mind. She therefore seriously begged Emmi not to lead Fani into any enterprise which might displease Mrs. Stanhope. Emmi should remember that a happy life stood before her friend, if Mrs. Stanhope would care for him always. But that involved a life according to her wishes, and no exploits must be undertaken to suit themselves. Emmi would have to reproach herself for her whole life if she disturbed the happy understanding between Fani and his patroness.

The girl gave a solemn promise not to lead

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Fani to anything which might displease Mrs. Stanhope and only to think out things which would make her more pleased than ever.

“It’s better, Emmi, not to think out anything,” the mother concluded. “Enjoy everything there is for you to enjoy with Fani and don’t hatch any plans. And one more thing, Emmi. Do not forget to ask for God’s protection every day and beg Him to help you everywhere and give you strength to carry out your good resolutions. You know that we are always in danger and too easily do wrong if He does not help us. Now that you are going so far away, my only consolation is that you are as near to Him there as here. Don’t ever forget to beg for His guidance, the way we do every night at home. You will do this, child, won’t you?”

Emmi promised never to forget this and to pray night and morning. The mother need not worry.

The aunt, meanwhile, stood at the window with the third child. “Fred,” she said pleasantly, “you must promise never to carry any bugs, even the prettiest, around in your pocket. You must not do such a thing in Mrs. Stanhope’s house, for they might escape, as they have so often done at

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home. Won't you remember that, Fred? Mrs. Stanhope could never understand such a thing, and you might spoil your whole visit by doing it. Think how lovely it is sure to be!"

"Don't worry, aunty! I'll lock all the little fellows up so they can't make any trouble," Fred reassured her. "You'll be simply delighted with all I mean to bring home."

Riki had listened to part of all these injunctions with great satisfaction. How pleasant not to need any herself!

But the carriage outside with the neighing horses had again awakened a mixed feeling in her.

As soon as the aunt stepped outside, she added, "Yes, yes, Fred, you can see what Mrs. Stanhope will say when a horrible toad or a red snail or an earthworm jumps around on her white tablecloth."

"Don't talk such nonsense, Riki," Fred replied deliberately. "Red snails and earthworms never jump."

"Yes, yes," Riki went on eagerly, "and you can see how Mrs. Stanhope will send you out of the room and take all your dinner away."

"No, Riki, I won't be able to see it then," corrected Fred.

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“ Yes, but you can both hear and see how it will be when Mrs. Stanhope will send you home at once and you’ll have to be ashamed before everybody on the train and in school and at home,” Riki still added.

“ No, Riki, I can feel it then,” corrected Fred.

The carriage whip reminded them that it was time to leave. Immediately after, all three sat in the carriage, while the horses gaily trotted off. Mother and aunt remained on the path waving their handkerchiefs till the carriage had turned the corner and disappeared.

Then the mother said with a sigh, “ If only they are kept from harm and come back to us safe and happy.”

To this the aunt replied confidently, “ They will come home safely if we commend them to God’s and His angels’ care. He will protect them and that will be much better than anything we could do.”

CHAPTER XII

ON THE BEAUTIFUL RHINE

THERE was such life and movement in the heretofore quiet garden on the Rhine as it had not seen for years, for the three young guests from Switzerland had arrived the night before. All three were greatly surprised and delighted when they found a separate room prepared for each, all looking out over the fragrant garden to the rushing river beyond. They felt like kings in this new luxury. Emmi already planned to watch the Rhine as much as she pleased by day and night and listen to the gurgling waves. No one would interfere and send her to bed.

Oscar thought what a splendid place his room would make for his flags. They would be in nobody's way here and no one would take them from him.

Fred eagerly examined the drawers of the pieces of furniture in the room.

The friends had had a joyous meeting and already felt as much at home together as if they had never been separated.

Fani and Elslie had not changed, as the doc-

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tor's children had feared sometimes; on the contrary it seemed as if their former companions felt a still closer friendship toward them. Fani was gayer and more lively, and Elсли, though a little timid, was as sweet and obliging as ever. Both looked so nice in their good clothes that Emmi found great pleasure in looking at them.

The first morning was spent in unpacking, with Aunt Clarissa's help. In the afternoon the children had received permission to roam about at will and get acquainted with their new place of residence. That was too wonderful! Emmi longed to go right down to the rushing river and see the old linden trees with the drooping branches which Fani had drawn for her. It was Fani's favorite spot and the two lost no time in running down there.

Fred hardly knew where to turn among all the live miracles which gleamed and whirred about in the garden. Here a golden beetle crawled across the lawn and over there whole flocks of bright-colored butterflies floated about in the sunny air. On the stones of the fountain a large green lizard sunned itself, while other curious little animals could be seen on the hedge further off. What a harvest this would make!

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Fred rushed here and there, quite beside himself with joy, as something new and unexpected was revealed every moment. And that was only the garden! What treasures wouldn't he find by the waterside under the ancient trees, on the thick hedges at each side and on the damp ground by the shore! The booty could not even be measured. Fred completely forgot the other children and swam about in such an ocean of delight as he had never before experienced. All these wonders would be his and he would collect some he had never even known about.

Oscar had carefully examined the garden, and after walking down to the river and alongside of the meadow, had come back to the plastered yard where stood two old tall oak trees. A round bench was placed here where one could settle down in the dense shadow. The boy sat here with Elсли, who had followed and shown him everything. Once more he gazed thoughtfully at the wide meadow, surrounded on all sides by a high hedge. Where the yard ended, a broad gravel-path led down to a high, iron-grated door, which connecting the tall hedge, surrounded the whole property.

“Did you really say, Elсли,” Oscar began,

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“that no more land belongs to Mrs. Stanhope outside of this hedge?”

“Oh, yes,” replied Elсли, “she owns the most enormous vineyard and you can have no idea how many grapes she has there. It is on the other side of the house towards the Rhine.”

“I don’t mean that,” continued Oscar; “Fani showed me that this morning. I mean the wide meadows across the road from here.”

Elsli was certain Mrs. Stanhope owned no land on the other side of the road.

“There is a nice hill over there, do you see it, Elсли?” Oscar went on, pointing towards it. “A big windmill stands on top and its wings turn in the air like big flags, beckoning in all directions. Do you see it? That would be a wonderful place for a festival. Those celebrating could settle down on the slopes, and high up the orator could stand as on a pulpit. Behind him the enormous flags would wave to and fro, announcing the feast to everybody far and near.”

Oscar was so carried away that Elсли grew quite enthusiastic, too.

“Yes, it would be lovely, but we’d have to ask the miller first, who owns the mill.”

Oscar did not think this necessary. No harm

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would be done to the mill, and as the short grass all about was just pasture, nothing could be ruined there. He wanted to go nearer and examine it in detail. Struck by a new thought, Oscar inquired, "How far did you get with our flag, Elсли?"

"Oh, I never thought of it any more," Elсли replied. "It's quite finished and I meant to put it in your room. I finished it, because Aunt Clarissa thought a bunch of Alpine roses for the Swiss people embroidered in the middle would be more beautiful than just a motto. So I did that for you."

But Oscar did not agree. He must have his own verse, which sounded more beautiful and splendid to him than ever. As aunty had not definitely objected to it in the end, she probably approved of it after all. Should he give it up now? Oscar made a face as if some misfortune had befallen him. Elсли understood, and having anticipated his objection, was ready with a suggestion. She showed him how it easy it was to have the verse on the other side of the flag, which would make it doubly beautiful. All Oscar had to do was to write his verse on the largest sheet of paper he could get. Elсли would fasten it on, while

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the Alpine roses would show on the other side. This was a splendid thought. Oscar grew cheerful, because this promised a better flag than he had ever hoped for.

“I think you are one of the most clever children I know, Elсли,” he cried out in his delight. Elсли blushed a deep red at this unexpected praise. Usually no one noticed her or spoke to her like that.

“But another question, Elсли,” went on Oscar. “What Swiss people have you found and invited to join our patriotic party? Do you remember I spoke about it when you left?”

Elсли had not forgotten, but had only discovered a single compatriot all this time. This was the baker’s boy, who brought fresh rolls every morning. But she had not been able to talk to him, as she was forbidden to go to the kitchen and talk to people there. “I am sorry I couldn’t do what you asked me to,” concluded Elсли, quite depressed. But Oscar was quite satisfied.

“That’s all right!” he assured her. “I can do the rest myself.” The only information he still wanted was the hour of the baker boy’s arrival and the direction he came from. Elсли could tell him this exactly.

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While the two were lost in conversation under the oak tree and Fred went on little expeditions under hedges and shrubs in the garden, Fani and Emmi walked about under the lindens on the Rhine, getting ever more animated in their gestures. Emmi had not been so joyfully excited for ages. What a surprise she had had! Since Fani had left home, she had been solely filled with the problem of how her friend could become a great artist. As Fani had said nothing of this in his letters, Emmi had been afraid that Fani had lost interest. First of all she wanted to find out how painters usually got started in their profession. Some good advice might be given to Fani before he lost all his enthusiasm. Emmi feared he had already given up the plan they had discussed so much together and for that reason had madly wished for a book called "Lives of Famous Artists." With the aunt's assistance she had secured it. This afternoon the first opportunity had come to broach the subject, and taking the book under her arm, she had drawn Fani with her. As soon as they were alone, she showed it to him, saying that she had only gotten it on his behalf. Here he could read how to become a famous painter, who with his art delighted all mankind,

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while he himself was supremely happy. Emmi thought her enthusiasm, coupled with the stories in the book, could bring Fani to his former views. How surprised was she when he refused to look at it, breaking out into a fit of passion.

“No, no, I won’t read it! I never even want to think of it. You see, Emmi, I have a drawing lesson every day, except just now while you are here. And the more I draw, the more I want to do nothing but that all day and every day. I have learned to do it quite differently, too, from the way I did it at home, and I’ll show you some of my drawings later. My teacher thinks I might improve and several times already has said I should become a painter.”

Emmi cried out in delight, “Oh, Fani, then everything is won. You can really become a painter now, and as you love it so, you’ll be the greatest painter in the country. But why don’t you tell Mrs. Stanhope? Then you could begin to study right away.”

Fani shook his head, looking dreadfully crushed. “It doesn’t help to tell Mrs. Stanhope, for I know she doesn’t wish it. Once on a walk I said that the greatest happiness a person could ever have was to become a painter. She answered

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me, saying that that was just a childish notion and that as soon as I knew life I would think differently. She then took me all over her property, for she owns a great deal of land, including some large vineyards beside the Rhine. A man could have no greater satisfaction in life, she said, than cultivating his land and enjoying his splendid harvests. She thought of me when she spoke that way, I know, and she wants me to stay here and take care of it all. Just imagine always living here and being so happy! I'd be dreadfully wicked if I wasn't grateful. But of course that will mean the end of all my painting." Fani hung his head.

"Oh, what a shame, what a shame!" wailed Emmi. "And I thought that everything was just beginning now. How dreadfully sad! It would have been so wonderful! Whenever I read my book, I always said your name instead of the name of the artist I was reading about. For instance: 'In delicacy of drawing Fani of Buchberg stands above all others.' You know as a famous artist that would be your name. All great painters take the names of their birthplaces and drop their family names. Doesn't it sound better

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than Fani Hopli? And once I read: 'No one knows how Fani of Buchberg succeeds in getting his melting colors. Till the present day he is the only one who can charm such magic colors upon his canvas.' Just think, Fani, if people should ever write about you like this. And now everything, everything is over!" Emmi's face was so discouraged that one might have thought the world held nothing more for her.

Fani sat down beside her. He had been thrilled by her words and apparently something within him took fire.

"I know something that might help," he finally said to Emmi.

Emmi leaped from the bench. "What is it? What is it, Fani? Speak!" she cried breathlessly. Fani had risen, too.

"Come, I'll show you something," he said, pulling Emmi with him to the very edge of the river. "Now turn round and look high up there towards this wooded height, but be careful that you don't fall backwards into the river. Do you see the high castle ruins up there overgrown with ivy?"

"I don't see anything. Oh, yes, now I can—it's an old tower," and here the excited girl would

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doubtless have slipped into the water had not Fani caught her in time.

“We’d better sit down on the bench again, where it’s safer,” he said, “and you can’t really see it from here. It is the most beautiful castle ruins you ever saw, with stones all green from age and covered with ivy. When the setting sun shines on it, it turns a deep red. Oh, it is beautiful. I saw it once from the steamer and I never saw anything more wonderful. Now listen why I wanted to show it to you,” continued Fani in the security of the bench. “In my last drawing lesson the teacher asked if I shouldn’t like to become a painter. Of course I said it was my greatest wish on earth, but as Mrs. Stanhope didn’t wish it, I knew it could never be. He understood quite well and said not to do anything against her wishes. But a way might be found, he believed, to bring her round to our way of thinking. He advised me to draw something beautiful from nature and let him have the picture. He would send it to Dusseldorf, where many others sent drawings, too. I don’t quite know what they do with them, only the best one gets the prize. If I really get the prize, Mrs. Stanhope might change and let me become a

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painter, and if I didn't, no harm would be done. I immediately thought of the castle ruins and I meant to make the picture very beautiful. But one can only see it from the middle of the river and it is impossible for me to get there."

Emmi again saw a ray of light ahead and became thrilled once more with enthusiasm.

"Why shouldn't we get there, Fani? Oh, it's too wonderful!" she cried joyfully. "We can take a trip on the steamer and then you can see the ruins. You'll just have to draw very fast."

"I'll just about be able to sketch it in a little when the steamer will have passed. In that way I won't be any further than before," was the boy's reply.

But Emmi was not so easily discouraged. After all, the whole thing depended upon making a drawing from the middle of the river. At once all her power of invention was made to bear on finding a way. At the very beginning of her thought she was interrupted by Fani's cry, "The dinner-bell!" This sound brought all the scattered guests into the huge dining room.

At the head of the beautifully-set table sat Mrs. Stanhope, kindly greeting all the children. Aunt Clarissa sat at the other end, bidding the

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children be seated on both sides. A splendid appetite was displayed, but the conversation had grown very quiet, due to Mrs. Stanhope's presence. Elсли was by far the most silent and also did not do justice to the splendid roast and the steaming pudding. Fred, who sat beside her, was filled with amazement, and after once asking her quite loudly, "What is the matter, why don't you eat?" she nudged him, asking him to be quiet.

After the meal Mrs. Stanhope led the whole company out to the terrace, where they sat in a semicircle on iron garden chairs. Mrs. Stanhope here informed the children that she intended soon to take a trip with them on the Rhine on a large steamer. They would go as far as Cologne, where a large zoölogical garden might interest them. Emmi was thrilled, but her thoughts reached far beyond the zoo. Fred was quite delighted, despite a very strong present temptation. A large moth had several times fluttered round his head and he simply burned to jump up and rush after it and catch it. But the aunt's serious injunction to remember his good manners and sit still, especially in Mrs. Stanhope's presence, kept him in his chair. Oscar also

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found a double delight to look forward to. The beautiful journey would be splendid and give him an opportunity to find quite different compatriots from Elsi's baker boy.

Next morning the children sat down to keep their promise to write home at once and relate their experiences. Each wrote in his or her way, but the contents were the same. A great deal was said about the beauty and splendor of the lovely place and all the delights promised them. Their only wish was that papa would double their term of six weeks and let them stay twelve instead, as it seemed impossible ever to get enough of such a visit. When the letters to the parents were finished, each child wrote one more, and after sealing it, enclosed it in the other. Not one said a single word about it. All were addressed to the aunt and had the self-same object. She was to procure them the permission for a longer stay from their parents, in fact one as long as was possible. Fred went so far as to say that if his father gave him a year and added a zero at the end, 3650 days would not be too many. All agreed that leaving all these wonders and returning home would be one of the greatest trials they would ever have to bear.

CHAPTER XIII

IN THE LITTLE FISHER-HOUSE

NEXT morning Oscar lay in wait for the baker boy at the large iron-grated door. With a large basket on his arm, from which spread the delightful odor of fresh bread, the boy came sauntering leisurely along. Oscar went a little way to meet him and inquired at once, "Which Canton do you come from?"

"That's not your business," replied the boy.

This way of speaking held no terror for Oscar; it was nothing new.

"You needn't be so rude," he retorted. "I asked you for a certain reason, which can only make you glad." Here Oscar gave his reason, proposing to have a splendid patriotic feast and gathering for all the Swiss people in the neighborhood. The boy now showed himself quite friendly, for his first words had only been spoken to show his independence. He revealed a great interest in the festival, but knew very few other Swiss in these parts. His aunt the baker's wife, had sent for him only six months ago to help her

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in her business and to deliver the bread. A shoemaker's boy from the Canton Uri lived near him and an errand-boy from the "Hotel-of-the-Grape," too, whose home had been near Schwyz. The large factory down on the canal belonged to a Swiss gentleman, however, and when delivering bread there every morning he had often seen the two big boys playing ball in the garden. They never talked to him, though. Oscar was more than satisfied with this report and sent an invitation to the boys from Uri and Schwyz to attend the feast. Oscar promised to give further information later on. As the baker boy came daily to the house, everything further could easily be settled.

When the children were in the garden again later that day, Oscar joyfully told Fani of the good prospects for a feast. All he had to do now was to get in touch with the family who owned the factory. Fani as a neighbor could easily pay them a visit. But Fani declared he would not take a single step in that direction, as Mrs. Stanhope had forbidden them to go into any houses of the neighborhood where they did not know the people.

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When Elсли, who had been standing beside them, saw how disappointed Oscar was, she said quickly: "Oh, Oscar, I think you could go, and I have an idea how. Before I left home Mr. Bickel asked me to find out about the factories in this neighborhood, as he wanted to know if some business could be done here. As I couldn't do it till now, I never wrote home about it. You might go there with the excuse of finding out about the business for Mr. Bickel."

"You always have the brightest ideas, Elсли," cried Oscar, delighted. The excuse was so good and the time so suitable that he ran off at once. Beside the factory stood the owner's pretty house, surrounded by a beautiful flower garden. The boys ran about under the trees playing such a vigorous game of ball that Oscar stood still near the fence to watch them and promptly forgot everything else. He was a good player himself, but had seldom seen such throws.

"Bravo!" he could not help exclaiming loudly, which made both boys turn to look towards him.

"Come in and join us!" cried one.

Oscar wished for nothing better. The next moment he was inside, and the ball went to and

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fro at a great rate. He had never before found his equals in skill, and his comrades also rejoiced in his prowess. The game went on uninterruptedly till a large bell announced the midday meal, reminding Oscar it was time for him to go home. They now had to get really acquainted at last, for which they had not found time before.

The two boys were called Fink, and were bright, warm-hearted lads, as people from St. Gallen usually are. Immediately a warm bond of friendship united the three, promising still more for the future. There was no time to talk at present, though, and Oscar could only allude to a large patriotic society he meant to found, which both boys promised enthusiastically to join. A time was settled for meeting in the near future, and Oscar returned, delighted with the success of his enterprise. Of course he had forgotten to ask what was spun in the factory.

From that day on Oscar regularly disappeared during the children's playtime, but nobody noticed it very much. Fred was so busy collecting he had no thought for anybody, while Emmi and Fani, always occupied with their own plans, were glad to be left alone. Elсли, understanding quite well that no one wanted her company, sat

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by the hour alone on the bench under the old linden trees. She often felt as if she were doing wrong to be so idle, while her parents at home had so much to do. Then she would again think of Nora, wondering if her friend had forgotten about her promise. Was she not asking God to let Elsli go to Heaven, too? It would be so easy for her to leave, nobody needed her, and she would love to go. In her heart Elsli had a secret dread of living on, she could never tell why. This beautiful place could never really be her home, while the thought of going back to her parents filled her with dread. In that way Elsli, in the midst of her beautiful life, had the feeling that she belonged to no one and was quite superfluous.

From the lindens a little foot-path led a distance along the water towards some willow bushes, where it disappeared. Elsli had often walked to this quiet place where no one ever passed. After sitting a little while on the bench, Elsli took the path, watching the restless ripples of the hurrying river. Lost in thought, the child had come nearer the willows, which were quite large and from a distance looked like a small, dense, lonely wood. The rushing waters were the only sounds to be heard, and

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human beings seemed far removed. But suddenly loud shrieks made Elslie start, and running behind the first willow bushes, she saw two small children who were unable to get out of the marshy ground. One was a tiny girl, while a small boy did his best to pull his sister out. As he was unable to help her, he added his loud despairing cries to hers. Elslie lifted the girl from the morass, and the boy succeeded in extricating himself with some difficulty. When the little children at last stood on dry ground again, she asked them where they lived. They looked pitiful with their dirty clothes and their shoes smeared with heavy clay.

The boy, barely six years old, apparently felt confidence in Elslie. Taking her hand he begged, "Won't you come with us and tell mother what has happened?" Herewith he gazed unhappily at his trousers and his little sister's frock, which, heavy and stiff with mud, began to look like pasteboard in the drying sun.

The little one also felt confidence in their rescuer, and seizing Elslie's other hand, she said confidently, "Please come with us!"

Elslie understood she was to plead for them with their mother. The frail little girl was hardly

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four and could not live very far away. Holding their hands firmly, Elсли went with them.

On the way the boy grew communicative and told his companion all he knew. Since their mother was sick the grandfather couldn't get out alone into the sunshine. His sister's name was Lena, his own Lukas, and his other brothers were called Tolf and Heini and were not much bigger than he. Meanwhile the three had reached the higher, denser willows beyond, which grew very close to the water. Between two of these trees stood a tiny low gray house, barely visible between the trees.

"Here," said the boy, leading Elсли over a low threshold right into the room. It looked pleasant and clean inside, and a ray of sunshine lay across one corner. By the back wall lay the sick mother in bed, gazing with eyes big with wonder at the entering group. In the sunny corner sat an old man with snow-white hair, who also showed surprise when he saw Elсли and the children. Two boys ran towards them, both hardly bigger than Lukas.

"We looked for you and couldn't find you," they both cried simultaneously.

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Elsli, stepping up to the bed, related the incident to the mother.

The woman, who looked very pale and weak, thanked Elsli most politely and explained how difficult it was with the children now, since she was ill and couldn't watch them. The older ones were already able to perform various little tasks about the house, while she sent the little ones into the open air to play. But being so young, they had very little sense and often went where they shouldn't. Here the mother looked anxiously at her small Lena, who stood in her mud-covered frock as in a stiff covering.

"Can I help you in any way?" asked Elsli, a little shyly. The woman looked up, surprised.

"We have never had to beg yet," she said, blushing slightly. "We help ourselves as best we can, but my illness has made it very hard. A young lady couldn't help us any other way."

"I am no lady. I can wash and hang up Lena's little dress," said Elsli understandingly. The astonishment of the woman grew.

"But your fine dress shows you come from rich people," she said, examining Elsli from top to toe.

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The little dress, formerly belonging to Nora, was of fine material and trimmed with silk ribbons.

“It doesn't belong to me, it was just given to me to wear,” explained Elсли.

A new feeling towards the friendly child awoke in the woman now. Apparently she had come from foreign parts, as her ways and language showed. Somebody had probably adopted her and given her the pretty dress. Full of new confidence, she assured Elсли how grateful she would be if the girl could change poor Lena's clothes.

Elsli set to work in such a way that the woman had to wonder anew. With an ease clearly showing that this was not done for the first time, Elсли freed the little one of her clothes, putting on a little jacket hanging on the wall. Taking the stiff frock on her arm, she led both children out into the kitchen, for Lukas still had on his caked boots. Here Elсли poured water into the wooden tub, and taking off the children's shoes and stockings she put them in and washed their feet. After drying them, she sent them to their mother, while she washed their clothes.

Under Elсли's good treatment the children

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grew happy again and obeyed absolutely, Lukas begging Elсли to come, too, as soon as she was done.

By now the older boys had come to the kitchen, eager to make acquaintance, too.

When Tolf saw Elсли going about these tasks as if she had done it always, he came up to her confidingly and said, "Couldn't you cook our supper, too? It's so late when father comes home, and he doesn't do it well."

"Yes, and once he went to sleep while doing it," chimed in Heini, "because he was so tired and the potatoes fell apart because they were cooked too long."

"Yes, and after supper father still goes out in his boat to fish, though he is dreadfully tired," continued Tolf. "He catches the fish he sells to people."

"Soon we must learn it, too," Heini took up the tale again, "but the oar is still too heavy for us. But father says we'll soon be strong enough. We all have to work or we won't have any bread to eat and they'll take our house away."

In Elсли memories of old times had arisen. How well she knew these worries! She seemed to see her own father before her, looking dread-

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fully tired while he said, "If only we can hold on to the house."

When the washing was done, Elсли came back to the sick woman's bedside, asking if she might prepare supper. The patient's eyes gleamed joyfully.

"Oh, you dear child, will you really do it?" she said, pressing Elсли's hand. The necessary things were soon explained. It was simple enough, and Elсли had done just the same thing many times at home.

The boys hastened out into the kitchen after her.

"I know something new both of you can do," said Elсли. "How old are you?"

"I am seven"—"and I am eight," they cried at once.

"Then you are plenty old enough. When I was eight I often cooked potatoes alone. Will you do it, if I teach you? When your father comes home tired, you can say, 'Just sit down to supper, father; everything is ready.'"

Both were full of eagerness to carry out Elсли's plan. She showed them how to make the fire, starting it with small, dry sticks, then laying on bigger ones. The potatoes were carefully

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washed and put in the pot with a little water. Soon they bubbled merrily, and Elсли went to fetch the sour milk.

The boys didn't take their eyes off the pot, and as soon as the potatoes began to stir about, they cried loudly for Elсли.

Much pleased, she said, "It shows they are good potatoes, if they jump like that. Now everything is ready." Pouring away the water left in the pot, she emptied the potatoes into a large round dish, carrying in the plates at the same time. Everything was set on the table ready for the father.

The old man, who had watched everything from his corner, beckoned to Elсли now. "You are good and helpful," he said; "will you come again tomorrow?"

Elсли nodded.

"You see I am lame," he went on, "and since my daughter is sick, I never get out into the sunshine any more. I have to lean on somebody, and the children are too little. Will you take me out for a while tomorrow?"

Elсли promised to come early the next day and take him out. But it was time for her to return

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now, for soon the dinner-bell would ring at Rose Hall, and she must not be late.

Once more the sick mother pressed her hand, hardly knowing how to express her gratitude. The little ones hated to let her go and cried, "Don't go, don't go!" but it had to be.

The bigger boys went with her as far as the door, where stood a man who, taking a big shovel from his shoulder, had just come home.

Elsli recognized him at once as the man she had often seen. She had always looked after him wistfully, because he glanced about him with just such sad eyes as her own father used to have. Now that he was near her he resembled her father still more, especially when he gazed at her with his sad face; but his glance was friendly when he saw both his boys clinging to the girl. At this memory the tears rushed into Elsli's eyes. Her father in all his dreadful poverty and trouble stood before her, and the emotion she felt was so strong she had to sob aloud. After shaking the hand of the man, who kindly pressed hers, she ran away.

Inside, the father at first could not understand what had happened, for everyone talked at once. Coming to the mother's bed, he bade the

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children be silent, as he wanted to hear everything from her.

Then he was told how the little girl in her beautiful dress, had miraculously done all the work, apparently knowing just what to do. "God saw we couldn't get along and sent us an angel with a kind heart," said the father, thinking Elсли had sobbed aloud from pity.

Elsli ran home and got there in time for supper. No one asked her where she had spent her afternoon, but the child decided to tell Aunt Clarissa about it as soon as she found a quiet hour. She knew the kind woman would let her repeat her visits, considering how needy the people were. When Elсли had asked the woman if she did not want a doctor, her reply had been that Elсли's coming was the best remedy. She had only grown worse because she had been unable to stay in bed and had attended to many necessary things. After a week's rest she would surely be well. A great joy had been awakened in Elсли's heart at the thought that she could help them. The whole family begged her most earnestly to come back, the mother, the children and the old man.

Next day Elсли never sat down a moment on

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the bench. As soon as afternoon came and all the others ran outside, she hastened towards the little house in the willows.

The four children stood in the doorway watching, and with a cry of delight ran towards her. Lena, whom Elсли took on her arm, crushed her with joy, while the boys clung to her with such affection as no one had ever shown her before.

As soon as Elсли could at last open the door the mother stretched out both hands and the grandfather in his corner said, "Thank God, here you are! I was afraid you wouldn't come." He wanted to go right out into the sunshine, as he had been cold all day. Elсли was quite ready, but found this a much harder task than she had anticipated. The old man leaned on her very heavily, and Elсли's strength nearly gave way. When they finally got outside, the old man wanted to sit down on some felled trees in the sunshine. Elсли sat down beside him, and while gazing at the sparkling water, the old man said, "Yes, yes, that is the beautiful old Rhine. I have enjoyed it for many years but life is going downhill with me and I won't see it very much longer. I know I have to go, and I wish I knew where. But that can't interest you, for you are still

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young, and life is just beginning for you. Be glad you can still stay a long while beside this beautiful river."

"I thought of something else when I saw this golden river," said Elсли. "I thought of the beautiful stream that flows through Paradise and of all those who are happy there."

"What did you say?" said the old man with a start, looking at Elсли quite perplexedly. "What can you know about this?"

"I know it from a song," answered Elсли, "that a friend taught me a long time ago. She is there already. Shall I say it for you?"

The man nodded, and Elсли was glad to be able to say her song to somebody who would soon have to go, and probably would enjoy it.

While the old man listened attentively she recited it to him from beginning to end:

"There is a streamlet crystal-clear,
A meadow intersecting,
And clumps of lilies glitter near
Its waters, heaven-reflecting.

And fragrant roses deck the sward
By golden light caressed,
While bird-song from the trees is poured.
'Tis Paradise the blest!

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There ever soft the breezes blow
Through all the flowery ways.
As in a dream the people go
And on each other gaze.

In glad astonishment men hail
Their fellows every one,
For they have fled a gloomy vale
And reached eternal sun.

'Tis thus they dwell in Paradise,
No griefs their souls annoy,
No tears can ever dim their eyes,
They live in purest joy."

The old man had several times shaken his head while listening. "That's nothing for me," he said, as soon as the child had finished.

Elsli was dreadfully disappointed. "And why not?" she asked sorrowfully. "That is for everybody. All people must die and it will be a great joy to go there."

The old man once more shook his head. "It's not for everybody; only the good ones get there." After a pause he added, "I could tell you something, but you couldn't understand. A person might have troubles and think God in Heaven, who could help him, does not do it. He might give up praying because he thought it was no use.

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He then might help himself the best he could and often in ways which were not right. Then when the time comes for him to die and he has not thought of his God for a long time, this door doesn't just stand open for him. He can't go where they are all so happy. But you won't understand."

But Elsli did understand. She remembered her mother saying that God never helped her and that it was easy enough for those to pray who are well off and saw that God was on their side. Then her father had said, sadly, "You must think differently, Margaret, or everything will get worse and worse with us."

Elsli was sad and silent at these memories and rose in order to attend to the sick woman. She promised to come out and fetch him in later on.

But not letting her go he drew her down again to his side. "No, no, stay a little while longer," he said. "Let's talk a little more. You are so sensible for your age. Don't you know another song you could say for me? I'd like to hear it."

Elsli knew others that Aunt Clarissa had taught her, but she could not tell which to choose.

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For a while she remained silent, then her eyes suddenly sparkled as she said, "Oh, I know one which will suit you. Do you want to hear it?" The old man nodded and Elсли began:

"The sunlight fails, the night is near,
And soon will end my day.
'Oh, shall I find a pathway clear?'
With folded hands I pray.

"Ah! blessed Lord, Thou art my light
Upon the path so lonely.
Remember not my sins this night
Or think in mercy only.

"Lord, I repent. Oh pardon me
For all the wrong I've done.
Let heaven's door wide open be
At the setting of the sun!"

The old man said nothing, and after a while Elсли got up to go into the hut.

He rose, too, not wishing to be left alone. While they slowly walked towards the house, he said thoughtfully to himself, "Yes, I heard that a long time ago when I still went to church. I suppose it is still true if only one could find the road again. Will you come again tomorrow, child, and say it once more?"

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Elsli promised, happy to have found just the right words to make him glad. Setting to work at the household tasks, Elsli now astonished the mother more than ever. She seemed to know as well as the mother what had to be done and did it all so carefully, quietly, and quickly. Elsli had gone through a severe school and knew without words what had to be done.

Tolf and Heini wanted Elsli to come into the kitchen so they could show her what they had learned. When the time for parting came, a struggle with the children ensued, for they had so much to tell her. Just when little Lena hung round Elsli's neck and the three boys clung to her skirts, the father entered. A curious smile lit up his face as he came towards her with outstretched hands, and his eyes looked at her as affectionately as her own father's at home had done.

Elsli sensed a deep happiness at that moment. She had really been able to cheer up the tired man. But it was time to go, and as she hurried away, she still heard the children's voices calling, "Come again tomorrow, come again!"

This went on day after day and Elsli began to live a new life. She looked so radiant that

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Fred once exclaimed aloud, "What makes you so happy, Elсли? You look as if you caught two jewel-bugs every day."

The secret of it was that she did not feel superfluous any more, for the four children in the willow hut actually counted the hours till she came. The sick mother, who was still bound to her bed, as well as the old man in his corner, longed daily for the hour of her coming. They would sit together in the sunshine, he listening to her song, and after that chatting a little. Every day Elсли could see how rejoiced the father was to find order at home instead of misery and untidiness.

But Elсли had one slight anxiety. She had never been able to tell Aunt Clarissa about her daily visits and she wondered if Mrs. Stanhope would allow them if she knew. At this thought a secret dread filled Elсли's heart. She knew she was doing no wrong and yet she was not certain if she could keep on. The fisherman's family must not be forsaken, that was sure. Several times she had wanted to tell Aunt Clarissa, but there was such disquiet in the house these days that she had always been put off. She therefore resolved to tell Aunt Clarissa that same evening, and beg

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to have a short hour with her alone. After supper she followed the old woman and asked for this.

Aunt Clarissa was willing if it would not take too long, as Mrs. Stanhope always wished them all to be together immediately after supper.

But Elslie had to say that it could not be told quickly, so Aunt Clarissa promised to call Elslie to her room in the near future during a quiet hour.

In that way the communication was again put off.

CHAPTER XIV

PREPARATIONS

THE trip on the Rhine had been undertaken on a fine day with brilliant sunshine. The journey had been lovely and the zoölogical gardens proved very pleasant. And yet when the children went to bed that night they all felt keen regrets. It was nice, of course, but, oh, how much nicer it could have been!

Upon boarding the steamer Mrs. Stanhope had said at once: "Come, children, sit down here and let us all stay together. I do not like you to run around because there are too many strangers on the boat."

Oscar had therefore no opportunity to find compatriots who might help to celebrate his feast. Emmi for some reason unknown to Fani, had hoped that the steamer might possibly stop opposite the ruins, and for this emergency had taken paper and pencils. When the steamer passed the spot so rapidly that she could barely see the ruins, she was greatly disappointed.

Fani, with a sad look at her seemed to say, "I knew it! Nothing can be done."

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Upon entering the gardens Mrs. Stanhope again requested them to remain together, as otherwise they might get lost. They must all examine the same animals and touch nothing in the whole garden.

This proved a frightful trial and constant torture for Fred. Little creatures hummed and whirred in the hedges here and there, and butterflies with gorgeous colors flew up from the pretty flowers. A red-golden, shiny bug crept across the grass right before his eyes and here another. A huge lizard on the stones also proved very tempting. He had to pass these fluttering, creeping wonders without a comment, not to speak of catching any. This nearly proved beyond his strength. Elсли walked silently along, regretting her inability to succor her friends all day, and she knew besides they were waiting for her.

Despite the beauty, all the children were glad when the day was over and the morrow with its pleasant prospects lay before them. Oscar immediately hurried off to his friends. Feklitus, for whose sake the festival had not yet taken place, had to be fetched from the station, and then the final preparations for the feast were to be made. It was set for the following day. Feklitus had

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not chosen either of the three hotels near the station, "The Grape," "The Eagle," or the "Morning Star," but one much further away near the river. It was as large as the church and school-house at home with six large houses added. This inn was called "The Crown Prince" and bath cures could be taken there. For that reason it was both popular and expensive,

The parents had immediately settled on "The Crown Prince." The name was really so suitable for their son, and he would be in such select company there. They liked him to go where it was expensive, showing at once who he was. Oscar had therefore been asked to order a room for Feklitus at "The Crown Prince."

As soon as the children's free time had come, Oscar rushed away. Such an intimate bond of friendship now united him with the Fink brothers that not a day passed that they did not meet. Oscar had never had friends with whom the hours simply flew by, each sharing every interest, game and plan the others had. Today, too, the hours of Feklitus's arrival had come much sooner than anticipated, and they had to hurry off.

Despite the hearty greetings coming from the

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two brothers, it remained one-sided, for Feklitus was not accustomed to have anything to do with people he did not know. After turning over his many pieces of luggage to the omnibus driver, the three friends accompanied the new compatriot to the hotel. A large room with bright red plush chairs and windows higher than most doors in Buchberg had been reserved for him.

Oscar lost no time in explaining what preparations had to be made that day for the great founder's feast tomorrow. First, the flag had to be fastened deep in the ground and tightly surrounded by stones, because next day no work must be done to spoil the spirit of the feast. Feklitus also heard what boys had been gathered together.

He turned up his nose. "You get together a noble company, indeed!" he mocked. "Every single one comes from the smallest Cantons."

"What!" cried Oscar indignantly, "and who wanted to put on the flag, 'Freedom, Equality and Brotherhood?'"

"I can still say that," said Feklitus, "but I am brothers with such as I wish, and not with everyone, like you."

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“Oho! is that the way you interpret it?” cried Oscar, still more angry. “What do you mean by equality, then?”

“Just what you mean, sameness, of course,” Feklitus retorted. “It means that it is all the same to me what others do, and that it can be the same to them what I do, for I’ll do just what I please.”

“Ha, ha! you are a nice Swiss brother, indeed!” exclaimed Oscar, his voice growing louder with excitement. “And you have forgotten all about Swiss history, too! Do you know what you would have to do if the men from the small Cantons hadn’t been? You would have to crawl under the stuck-up hat and wipe the dust from the governor’s boots.”

At this point the other two boys eagerly took up the argument, supporting Oscar with such animation that their voices grew ever louder. Feklitus began to assert that he knew Swiss history as well as they, for he had been always at the head of his class in school. More penetrating still came Oscar’s voice again.

“Yes, and when we are grown up we’ll show you what Brotherhood, and Equality and Love for our Country mean. We three will found a

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patriotic party for all Switzerland, and a festival will take place every year for everybody. At the banquet at which all Swiss people from all Cantons will take part, the Cantons who entered first will sit at the head and you'll see then who they are."

"Yes, then you can see who they are!" yelled both Fink boys, while Feklitus said still louder:

"You won't be at the top, though, I know that!"

An important looking waiter opened the door of the room just then and threw a searching glance at the windows, to see if they were still whole. Standing politely at the open door, he indicated that he meant to see the end of this hubbub.

Oscar found it wise to subdue his voice and invited his friends to come to the festival grounds. The polite servant had had a calming influence upon the others, too. All were silent and willingly followed Oscar. Going by Rose Hall, he quickly brought out his flag, then they went on.

Arrived at the windmill the flag was properly examined and admired. What beautiful work was the wreath of bright alpine roses and the green, shiny leaves about it! On the other side

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Elsli had neatly sewed the large sheet of paper on which Oscar had written his favorite verse in huge letters.

The evening sun shone pleasantly on the hill where the windmill stood, and it was doubtless a fine place for a festival. The Fink brothers began to dig the hole for the flag, while Oscar held it and Feklitus just watched.

A short time before the owner of the field had taken a little stroll to his mill, and while attending to some affairs inside he heard rather peculiar noises. Looking out from the top he saw the following words on the flag immediately before his eyes:

“ Now forward one and forward all,
Let freedom's word be spoken!
We'll fight until the tyrants fall
And every chain is broken.”

At the same time he saw it being fastened in the ground.

“ Hm, hm! and on my property, too! We shall see, indeed!” murmured the peace-loving miller, waiting for further events.

When the flag, fastened tight with some stones, stood up straight despite a stiff breeze, the

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boys lifted it out again, laid the stones in the hole and covered it with the dug-up sod. Everything was now ready for tomorrow.

Throwing a last contented glance at the fine spot in front of the mill chosen for the speech, which he had all ready, Oscar said to his comrades, "Well, tomorrow at six o'clock! Don't come sooner because the others can't get off before. Place of meeting at the three ash trees behind Rose Hall. We start from there with music."

After the promise was given to appear punctually next day they parted.

That same day Emmi was also making plans. At lunch she was very restless, swallowing her food indiscriminately. Just as soon as Mrs. Stanhope got up and wished the children a pleasant afternoon, Emmi slipped out by the door as fast as a weasel, down the stairs and into the kitchen. The fat cook looked up in surprise from her cup of coffee, which she had to have after every dinner.

"Well, miss, what has happened?" she asked calmly.

"Nothing," replied Emmi, "only I wish you would do something for me. But finish your coffee first."

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"I have, already. What is the matter?" inquired the cook, deliberately getting up.

"I have such dusty shoes, would you be so kind as to wipe them for me?" asked Emmi most politely.

"I don't see that it matters a great deal," remarked the cook, looking at them, but she lifted Emmi's foot to a stool and began to polish.

"I also want to ask you something," Emmi began again. "Where do the nice fish come from we so often get to eat?"

"They come out of the water," replied the cook.

"Yes, of course, but does a fisherman bring them, or do you yourself get them?" inquired Emmi further.

"Well, I should think I didn't! The idea of my having to trot after them a few hours or so before I have them in the pan! There now, they are shiny again," she said, laying aside the brush.

"Is it a few hours' walk to the fisherman?" Emmi asked, perplexed.

"Oh, bah! One can't swear to every word one says. If the young miss wants to know how far it is she had better measure the road herself," replied the cook.

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“ I'd like to do it very much. Will you please be so good as to tell me where it is? ” asked Emmi, thanking her politely.

“ Just straight down the road from Rose Hall. Then take the foot-path to the left through the meadows as far as the willow bushes. That's all.”

Emmi ran away gratefully.

“ She wants to see a fish dangling on her rod,” remarked the cook to herself.

Emmi flew to Fani, who was in the garden. “ Come, I know everything. We can go now,” she cried enthusiastically, pulling Fani out to the road with her. While they wandered on, she told Fani she had seen a fishing boat yesterday evening quite near the shore and after finding a pretext to go into the kitchen, which was really forbidden, she had found out from the cook where the fisherman lived. If they hired his boat, they could row out into the middle of the stream and hold the boat while Fani made his drawing. If he couldn't do it all at once, they could go a few times more, as the small boat couldn't cost them very much.

Fani was thrilled at first, but soon added, a trifle discouraged, “ But, Emmi, who is going to

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row us out? I don't know how and the fisherman would charge a terrible lot for coming with us."

"I know, but I can row splendidly; you will see!" said Emmi proudly. "I have often rowed as many as four people around the lake when we were visiting some friends. We went out without a man, too, just Oscar and our friends and I usually rowed quite alone. You'll soon see how well I can do it."

Fani was reassured, for he had great confidence in Emmi's capabilities.

The narrow path at the left was only discovered after a hard search, but after seeing the little willow trees near the water, they went straight towards them.

It was already towards evening when they found the path, which was twice as long as the one Elсли had discovered. It looked still and lonely under the masses of willows, and only the sound of the water could be heard from below. The children went nearer till they saw a little fishing boat not far from them on the water, also some thin smoke rising from a tiny house.

Just then a man went down to the boat and began to hammer on it. Emmi stepped right up to him and Fani followed.

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“Are you the fisherman?” asked Emmi, as soon as they were near the boat.

The man, raising his head, ceased his hammering. “I am,” he said politely, “Can I be of service to the young gentleman and lady. Do you wish to buy some fish?”

Emmi explained she had come to see if they could rent his boat for a few hours. They only wanted to row out a little distance from the shore.

The man looked at the two a little doubtfully, but Fani looked able and strong enough to manage a boat. Then he said cautiously, “I suppose the gentleman and lady are used to rowing?”

“Yes, yes, of course; it won't be our first trip; we can help ourselves,” Emmi assured him, while Fani chimed in, too.

The fisherman said that he needed the boat himself that evening, also he had to repair a few trifles. If they came tomorrow, it would be ready for them. If he wasn't there himself, they could untie it. He begged them, however, to stay as near as possible to the shore. The young gentleman could use the hook, too, where the oars did not reach; of course he knew all about that.

Emmi promised to take good care of everything and pay the man in the evening. Then she

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and Fani wandered merrily home, thrilled with their prospects, while Elslie also strolled towards Rose Hall along the narrow path beside the water. All three came from the same place without knowing it, for Elslie had left the hut when the others were already on the road.

When they met in the garden each asked the other, "Has the supper-bell rung yet?" When it rang presently, they went up the stone steps together without any annoying questions, each being glad not to have to answer any.

CHAPTER XV

DISQUIET ON THE RHINE

THE most quiet times spent by the little group of children in Rose Hall were the early morning hours. These were devoted to writing letters and doing tasks for school.

Today a restlessness seemed to have taken hold of everybody. Fani and Emmi did not seem to be able to sit still a moment. The boy kept constantly looking through his papers as if unable to decide on anything, while the girl made signs to him across the table. While studying French verbs, she suddenly seemed to be in need of several pencils and sharpened at least six, one after the other. Oscar was writing a composition about his holidays, but one might have thought he was composing a drama and needed to study the necessary gestures for that. Every moment he threw back his head and gazed with wild enthusiasm at the ink pots on the table.

To keep order Aunt Clarissa spent these hours in the room with the children. But today she was called out by Lina, the spotless-looking,

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but just then very excited, chambermaid. The door had barely closed when Oscar cried with passion, "Don't run away again tonight, Fani, so no one knows where you are! Give your word of honor that you will be on the spot in time. A quarter to six we gather near the three ash trees and at six o'clock we march off to the festival grounds. Promise."

Fani looked at Emmi. "You can promise that, Fani; we'll be back in time," said Emmi. "We are going to another place first, but we can easily be back if we start off at two o'clock."

"Go where you please, only give your promise, Fani," repeated Oscar.

Fani did so. He would meet them at the ash trees near six o'clock.

"And you must promise to come, too, Fred. You see we really haven't very many people," Oscar insisted.

But it was not easy to make Fred give a promise. He only said cautiously he might come, if something more important did not keep him.

Oscar was furious and tried to have his way, but Fred proved very stubborn. Emmi and Fani, glad of a pretext to shirk their work, joined openly in the quarrel.

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Outside Lina with highly-flushed cheeks had declared to Aunt Clarissa that she would not remain in a house where such horrors happened. Nobody would believe it if he had not seen it.

“But what is it, Lina?” Clarissa interrupted the stream of words, which suggested very vague and uncertain horrors. Clarissa could not imagine what they were.

“I have noticed some things before,” Lina went on, frankly indignant, “but I thought they came in through the windows. But today, just now, I opened a drawer in the young master’s washstand. Yes, I went to clean it, and a live frog jumped straight at me. I opened another, and a whole crowd of live spiders came crawling out. When I beat about me with my duster, they crawled into all the corners. I saw a key on his desk, and wondering what Mrs. Stanhope would say if another awful creature had gotten in there, I opened it. And again, one after the other—oh, I can hardly say how it looked; snails, bugs, caterpillars, everything alive, crept and crawled around. I have never seen such a mess and dirt. I emptied everything and wiped and dusted all I could. But everywhere are spots and dirt. And to think that such creatures are crawling all over the

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house now and climbing up on our clothes, getting into our hair! It's awful! And to do it all on purpose! for that wasn't an accident. I think the young gentleman gathered them all up to frighten anybody who just happened to open these drawers."

"No, no, that's not it!" Aunt Clarissa could say at last. "Come with me and we'll see what can be done. The boy never wanted to frighten anybody, only I fear he kept them where they should not be put. Let us look."

Fred's room was in a dreadful state. All the drawers from the furniture were pulled out, revealing ugly spots left behind by the various little insects which had lodged there. On the floor the gruesome remains of squashed spiders, bugs and caterpillars lay around. On the window panes stuck several butterfly wings or severed legs of beetles which had fled there in the recent orgy of annihilation. Clarissa gazed wide-eyed at this destruction. "Call the boy up to me, Lina," she said, "but make no further noise about it. I want you to understand clearly that everything must be set in order without annoying Mrs. Stanhope."

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Murmuring something to herself, Lina went downstairs to fetch Fred.

When the latter entered his room and gazed from one empty drawer to another, from the annihilated bugs on the floor to the sad remains on the windows, he stood motionless with a face as white as chalk.

“My dear boy,” said Clarissa kindly, “don’t get frightened! I only wanted to tell you that you must not put live animals into these drawers any more. See, for one thing they soil everything, and besides that, they are sure to perish. Better look at them carefully when you play outside.”

“Oh, my collection, oh, my collection!” groaned Fred.

“That is no way to make a collection, child. But don’t be unhappy about it; we’ll talk about it later,” Clarissa tried to comfort him. “There must be many insects left. First of all, everything has to be thoroughly cleaned, as you can see yourself, and I hope you will never again give us so much trouble.”

Fred threw a glance at the little drawer which had held his rarest treasure, a humming-bird

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moth, and at another which had housed two splendid beetles. Everything was empty, dead and destroyed. He went outside. To join the others and answer their questions why he had been called away was unendurable. He ran down as far as the linden trees, where he had the best fortune in finding such specimens as now were on the floor, the panes; it shocked him even to think of it! Throwing himself down on the ground he sobbed aloud. That afternoon when all the others ran out into the sunshine, he sat down in a corner of the room with his writing pad and composed the following letter:

“Dear Aunty:

“You will have to cry when you hear what has happened. Yes, everything is over! The whole collection gone, yes, with one stroke it was destroyed and squashed and scattered into the corners and holes by a stupid chambermaid. As I had no boxes to put them in, I had to find some safe place for my specimens. In my desk, as if made on purpose, were piles of little drawers. But the maid arrived, of course knowing nothing of rare specimens, and fell upon my collection with her broom. Of course the specimens can't possibly be replaced. She is a barbarian. I obeyed you to the letter and never carried a single little frog or beetle around in my pockets, and

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that's what has happened now. I can't stand even telling you what wonderful specimens I had. Oh, the two gorgeous red beetles, bright red wings, purple body, blue and shiny like jewels. And an oleander humming-bird moth. Such a rarity! And my beautiful vineyard caterpillar! You know it of course, don't you, aunty? Brown with yellow bands and blue spots—yes, trampled on—I can't say any more! The longer I think of it, the sadder I get. But I must say something else. One may call a person Aunt without her being a real, natural aunt at all. From the beginning I always advised Fani to ask Aunt Clarissa whenever he wanted anything. But he always said, 'One must not do that.' Of course I understood and wouldn't start him on anything wicked. But you can now see the difference between a real aunt and a make-believe one. There is nothing in the whole world one couldn't ask of you, and if you can't do it, you will say no, and then there is an end. One can't give up asking just for that, because there are always new things one needs. The whole misfortune came about because Fani wouldn't get me ten or twenty old boxes from Aunt Clarissa. He said one must never ask for so many things at once and he told me to wrap everything up in paper. Can you imagine my wrapping live animals in paper? But of course Fani knows nothing about such things. The only wish I have now is that you will write in your next letter that we must come home at once. It has been four weeks

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already and that is long enough to be away. It is best at home after all and one is safest there. One can have one's boxes there and whatever else one needs for living, and all is in its proper place and things are not so uncertain. One can always come to you when one is in trouble, and everything is straightened out again. If only you would write that we should leave on Saturday! Then we could be home on Sunday and what joy that would be!

“ Good-bye, dearest Aunty!

“ Your ever faithful nephew,

“ FRED.”

It was a mild, lovely evening. Under the three ash trees behind Rose Hall the Fink brothers, the baker-boy from Lucerne, the shoemaker's boy from Uri, the hotel errand-boy from Schwyz and Feklitus had gathered. Oscar stood in the middle with his flag, sending anxious glances in all directions. Fred and Fani were still missing, and the clock had already struck six. They waited five, then ten minutes longer, but the missing ones didn't come.

Oscar realized that all waiting was probably in vain. Fred didn't want to come, he had noticed that this morning; but where was Fani? At this thought Oscar angrily clenched his fist and

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said furiously, "Oh, that horrid Emmi, that Xantippe!"

His original idea had been to set out with a flourish of drums, pipes, flutes and harmonicas. But Oscar had given these up, as he wanted to obey his father. Being on strange ground, they had better do everything very quietly and without unnecessary noise. Also he could not find a drum and Feklitus would not play the flute. It was high time to go, and the procession started off, led by the baker-boy, playing soft melodies on the harmonica. The others followed in pairs, Oscar in the middle, waving his flag above him. It was quickly fastened on the hillside and soon fluttered gaily in the wind, visible from afar. Oscar stood under it, while the others settled in a circle on the slope.

With solemn voice the orator began:

"Brethren and Friends:

"What does this mean? Who are these agitators?" a voice suddenly thundered behind him.

The boys jumped up from the ground and Oscar looked around. Two big bearded men in uniform stood right behind him with a threatening air. As quick as lightning Oscar turned,

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and with mad leaps rushed down the hill. The Fink brothers followed, scarcely touching the ground. Towards the other side ran the baker-boy, with the boy from Schwyz following on his heels. The latter stumbled over the first and both soon disappeared in a ditch. Feklitus had remained. He knew who he was, and of course they would be careful not to touch *him*, Feklitus, the son of Mr. Bickel. He knew he could not run fast, and the sudden appearance of the policemen had paralyzed him somewhat. But as he did not wish to stay alone, he had seized the boy from Uri, clutching him with all his might.

One of the men came up to the two and said harshly, "You come to the guard-room at once, where you can explain what you meant to do and what this means."

The errand-boy tried to duck as much as he could. Half in fright and half in anger Feklitus replied, "We didn't do anything. It's not our fault. Oscar started it all."

"That's not our business," the bearded one growled. "You must come. Our motto is, 'Whoever is caught is hung.'" Then turning to his comrade they consulted in whispers.

Feklitus had grown as white as a sheet. "Did

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you hear? They want to hang us," he said, clutching the errand-boy ever tighter.

"Let's run," the latter groaned, half choked.

Feklitus looking at the two men, who were talking to the miller, suddenly gave a leap. The horrible fear giving him supernatural strength, he flew away like mad, with his hair standing straight on end. The other boy rushed after him, and without once looking back, they sped onwards, on and on till both had disappeared. They had not been pursued.

Breathless Oscar arrived at Rose Hall. Flying upstairs and into his room, he pulled out his writing pad and flinging himself down on a chair he wrote feverishly, still gasping for breath:

"Dear Aunty:

"I have to ask you for your assistance! Something has happened which may have very annoying consequences and you alone can help me out. I am sure you will find a way. I really wanted to be careful and remember what papa said, and I was especially careful not to make any noise. I am sure you didn't think it wrong of me to use my favorite motto on the flag, for you felt yourself that, if we had tyrants, the words would be very nice. I can't tell you everything that happened in detail, but at a perfectly quiet, innocent gathering we were attacked. We were

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able to escape, though. But I am afraid that, if they find out my name, the authorities here might write to papa, which would make it dreadful. Won't you please help me, aunty? As soon as such a letter comes, please take it, for you always see the postman first. You'll read it alone, aunty, won't you, and answer it, too? You know best how to explain to the men that we meant no harm by having a reunion of Swiss patriots and a feast. Oh, you must help me, aunty, so no awful things will happen. I'd like it best if you told us to come home tomorrow, as our stay here has been long enough. Papa and mamma surely want us to come, too, for it is awfully hard to do our school-work properly. Everything really goes much better at home. One feels secure there in everything one does, also in one's pleasures. Please write us very, very soon that we must leave. And once more, I beg you, aunty, to come to my assistance and save me from this horrible anxiety.

“ Many hearty greetings from your nephew,
“OSCAR.”

The writer, after eagerly folding and addressing his letter, hastened to the distant post-office, for supper time was already near. Upon his return and just as he wanted to enter the yard, he started back. At the door stood one of the uniformed policemen with the flag which was left

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behind. The door was being opened and the man entered.

Oscar retired behind the large oak tree with a beating heart. What was happening inside? Would Mrs. Stanhope hear of it? How would she look at him now? Perhaps they would be sent home at once with a letter to his papa, which would have dreadful consequences. His heart beat ever louder. Had the man come to fetch him and lock him up? Was it perhaps not allowed to dig a hole on the miller's property, though it was only grass? If only he had obeyed his father and not undertaken anything on other people's grounds! All these dreadful thoughts tormented Oscar, while the feared officer remained inside the house.

With much trouble Clarissa, with the unwilling Lina, had removed every trace of disorder in Fred's room, when a loud ringing of the door-bell called her downstairs. It was a policeman with Oscar's flag and she wondered what had happened. Clarissa looked anxiously towards several doors, hoping that Mrs. Stanhope would not appear. Then she asked the flag-bearer what he wanted.

It had been discovered, he said, that the flag

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belonged to this house and was used at some boy's game that afternoon. On account of the verse on the flag the miller had feared the rising of some agitators and had begged the police to help him. Mrs. Stanhope was requested to let her young people play such games in her own grounds from that time on.

Clarissa again watched the doors anxiously. Assuring the man this should be done, and pressing something into his hand for the trouble he had had, she hastened upstairs with the rolled-up flag, fearing that Mrs. Stanhope might see the rebellious verse. Such violent words could not please her. When the supper bell rang presently and the flag was stored in safety, Clarissa heaved a deep sigh of relief. She had no desire that these troublesome events should come to Mrs. Stanhope's ears: her mistress was not used to such agitations, and she might not bear them well. But everything was settled, and Clarissa went to the dining room with a light heart.

Tame and quiet as never before, Oscar and Fred went to their seats. Their heads dropped like two hyacinths after a night's frost.

Elsli sat beside Fred with flushed cheeks, for she had had to hurry dreadfully today to be on

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time. She also bent deeply over her plate in order to hide her scarlet face. Emmi and Fani had not come.

Mrs. Stanhope gazed for a while at the empty seats, then at the children.

Clarissa listened, but no one came.

“I like the children to have their freedom, but the order of the house must be observed,” said Mrs. Stanhope quite severely. “Till now Fani has never taken such liberties, and I’d like to know how this has happened.” Mrs. Stanhope looked inquiringly from one boy to the other, but seeing only two remorseful faces, she said not a word further, thinking their sorrowful expression was caused by their sister’s absence.

The meal began and took its course, but Fani and Emmi did not appear. When supper was over, Mrs. Stanhope, as usual, stepped out to the balcony and the others followed. It began to grow dark. In Clarissa, who had thought till now that carelessness had made the children late, rose a great fear. Could something have happened to them? Darkness had come and they were not home.

Clarissa got up. “I am sure you will let me send out some people to seek the children, dear

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Mrs. Stanhope," she implored. "I can't help fearing that something has happened to them."

"Where would one send people, when one doesn't even know where they went?" replied Mrs. Stanhope unhappily. "It is very annoying. Fani never before did a thing like this. Yes, I am going, too." Getting up she led the way out while Clarissa and the three children followed.

Outside the butler, the coachman, the maid and the cook were holding a consultation about the children's absence and the possible anger Mrs. Stanhope would show. When their mistress appeared, all four tried to hurry away, but she would not let them. She ordered both the butler and the coachman to inquire in different directions for the lost ones, in that way one might get a clue as to where they had gone. But Lina here stepped forward saying, "that the cook knew something. The young lady, she thought, had gone fishing. All the young people seemed to love animals, however horrible they were." This she said with a furious glance towards Fred, still thinking of her recent trouble.

"Oh, for heaven's sake!" cried Clarissa, frightened, "if the children ran down to the

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Rhine, something frightful may have happened. If one only knew to which side they went!"

Here the cook gave her information that the young lady had asked her where the fisherman lived from whom the fish were bought. That's where one should look for them.

Clarissa set out now, asking the butler and the coachman to show her the way.

At this Elslie felt a greater anxiety than anybody. If Aunt Clarissa went to the fisherman's hut, everything she ought to have told long ago would be revealed. Through her daily visits and her closer acquaintance with the family, suffering under such want and hardships, Elslie finally had done all the housework there. By and by, however, the child had realized that Mrs. Stanhope would probably disapprove of this. In dreadful fear she therefore hastened after Clarissa, imploring loudly, "Oh, please let me come, too, Aunt Clarissa. I'd like to tell you something. I meant to do it long ago. I can tell you on the way, if you let me."

"Dear child, what are you thinking of? Who could have time for that now?" cried the woman. "Go back quickly, child! What will Mrs. Stanhope think if you run away like that?"

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When Elсли returned, quite crushed, Mrs. Stanhope made no remark, thinking that her anxiety for Fani had made her run away. She found it safest for all the children to go to bed at once: still another might get lost while she was left alone with them. They could render no material assistance in the search. Silently each went to his or her room, carrying a heavy burden. While Oscar and Fred sank into a deep sleep as soon as they touched their pillows, Elсли sat on her bed with wide-open eyes. The sorrow in her heart had grown so heavy that it drove sleep away. In the beginning she had meant no harm, but she should never have kept on visiting another's house without telling Mrs. Stanhope: it was a wrong way to act towards her benefactress. At the same time she could not foresake these poor people, either. Today, the mother had gotten out of bed for the first time and had told her she was her only help and comfort; without her she could never get her strength back. Now everything might be revealed, and Mrs. Stanhope might forbid her ever going to them again. Yes, she would probably get very angry that Elсли had done it so long without her knowledge. Perhaps

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she would not keep her in her home any more, or Fani either, and everything would be her fault.

The anxiety in Elсли's heart grew more unbearable the more she meditated. Finally she broke out in these words, "Oh, I don't know of any help. If only I knew what to do!"

Elсли suddenly remembered Aunt Clarissa once saying to her that people in trouble could bring their sorrows to God, who could bring help where no one else could. As Elсли had already said her daily evening prayer she folded her hands again and supplicated the good Father in Heaven to help her in this trouble. Fani must not be made unhappy through her fault and he must be kept somehow from doing further wrong. At the same time the poor fisherman's family must not have to bear renewed misery. Elсли grew quiet now and could lie down to sleep. Her anxiety was laid in God's hands, and a deep calm came into her heart. Since He knew she need not worry, for God realized she had never meant to do any wrong.

CHAPTER XVI

AN UNEXPECTED JOURNEY

FANI and Emmi hastened down to the Rhine immediately after lunch, for the boy fully expected to keep his promise to Oscar. They came to the shore quite soon and found the oars and the landing-hook inside the boat, which was only loosely tied.

The children jumped merrily into the boat, and seizing the oars, Emmi with ease pushed off. She seemed to steer quite well and displayed her knowledge gained on the lake, while rowing about in a high wind, which she had loved.

Fani sat down calmly and said, "Just tell me whenever you need my help. I am sorry I can't row, too, Emmi."

"That isn't necessary," said the girl, full of confidence, bravely working the oars. But before long she realized two things she had entirely overlooked. First of all, the fisherman's boat was much heavier to handle than the light crafts she had been used to, and the other drawback was the strong current of the river. Emmi fought

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against the rapid water with all her might, doing her best to row out far enough to see the ruins. She had made previous plans as to how to anchor in mid-stream.

“Take the hook, Fani,” she cried, a trifle upset by the stormy waves, which gained more power the further they left the shore.

“Oh, Fani, put the hook into the bottom, if you can reach it, and press hard against the waves,” said Emmi, showing him how to do it, and exerting all her strength to steer the boat in that direction. For a little while they succeeded. “Push harder, Fani, still harder,” cried Emmi again, while the boy did his very best.

“We are going down too far. Put in the hook so we don’t get driven down stream. Now, I’ll row towards the middle. Look! here are the ruins, Fani; just a little further and you can begin to draw.”

Fani held the hook with all his might, then stuck it in again, but they had been driven down stream. “Oh, it is taking us away!” cried Fani, when he found his efforts fruitless.

“Take one oar, Fani, and I’ll take the other. We had better go ashore again,” cried Emmi, frightened. “Come quickly!”

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But the current had already pulled the oar out of her hands and was driving them along. "Oh, what shall we do, what shall we do?" cried Emmi, terrified. "Nobody can see us here and the boat might be upset."

The boat was taken down stream by the swift current, while the children sat there, pale as death. Fani, completely choked with fear, said not a word.

"Oh, Fani! we are lost; nobody can help us!" exclaimed Emmi anew. "Oh, we must pray, and I just remember that I have never prayed since I came to Rose Hall. I forgot it, because mamma didn't come to my bed here the way she did at home. She told me to, but I never did it. Oh, if God shouldn't hear me now! Just think, how awful! Please, Fani pray, too! Do you do it every day?"

With a choked voice Fani replied, "No, I always thought Elсли did it for both of us."

"It doesn't count if you don't do it for yourself," groaned Emmi. "Mamma explained it to me. Oh, I wish I hadn't forgotten! God may punish me now and not hear my prayers."

All at once Emmi grew silent and looked up to heaven in her terror. She supplicated

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Him from her deepest soul to forgive her and not forget her as she had done her prayers to Him. He must look down upon her and save her out of that horrible rushing river.

“Oh, a steamer! a steamer is coming!” cried Fani, frightened, for the big steamboat was rapidly bearing down upon them. In a few minutes the little boat would be upset and swallowed by the agitated waves.

In this terrible situation Emmi began to scream as she had never screamed in all her life. Fani also regained his voice and yelled the best he could. The awful steamer was close now; the little boat upset.

That instant Emmi was seized by a strong arm then thrown high and caught again. Then she stood on the deck of the steamboat. Fani also came flying up, to be received by a vigorous sailor and set on his feet.

They stood there, shaking from cold and terror, soaked to the skin from top to toe. Passengers came running from everywhere, examining them with great curiosity.

A tall, dark-bearded man stepped towards them now with angrily-gleaming eyes. It was the captain. “What madness is this?” he thun-

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dered. "Is it our steamer's business to look out for miserable fishing boats? Whose fault would it have been if you had been drowned?" As soon, however, as he saw the two pitiful little figures, which till now he had not done on account of his rage, his voice grew a little milder. The children trembled and every drop of blood seemed to have left their bodies. "Take them down and see that they get something hot to drink after their ducking!" he said to one of his subordinates, who was standing near them, gaping.

Emmi and Fani were only too glad to escape from the curious glances. In the cabin below they obediently swallowed the steaming contents of a glass of which burned their throats most curiously. They were too wet even to sit down.

After a while the captain came down to find out where they had meant to go with their old fishing-box, as he called their little craft.

Fani reported what the object of their trip had been and how sadly they had failed.

During this recital the captain's face twitched several times with merriment, and as soon as he knew everything, he said in a friendly manner that they must try to get dry the best they could. He was going to stop in Cologne, where they

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could take a train and travel home. In thanks for his trouble Mrs. Stanhope could invite him to her next grape-gathering.

So they came to Cologne again, but quite differently from the first time.

As they took leave, the captain advised them to take their next trip on land and not on water: the ground was safer.

It was already dark when the two ran from street to street, but despite all their inquiries, they could not find the station. From dim streets they came into bright ones and after a long while they again stood on the wharf where they had landed. They knew not what to do and it was getting late. If they should get to the station after the last train had left, what would become of them? They couldn't walk home in the night, and besides it was too far. On their pleasure-trip the steamer had taken nearly two hours from Rose Hall to Cologne. As the wanderers feverishly hastened along, they met a watchman in a narrow, dim street, who asked them what they were doing. Upon seeing their frightened faces and finding out their sorry plight, the man took pity on them and setting out with them he led them through numerous streets to the station. Here

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they heard that a train had just left and another one was due in two hours. The children sat down on a bench before the building, and it was far from comfortable in their wet clothes. But they did not complain, as much worse things preyed upon their minds.

"Oh, I am so frightened, Emmi," said Fani, heaving a deep sigh.

"I, too, but I don't quite know why," replied Emmi.

"But I do!" groaned the boy. "I am sure Mrs. Stanhope will send us both home again, and Elсли, who could never stay alone, will have to suffer, too. Just wait and see if we won't be sent away."

"Oh, how frightful!" wailed Emmi, troubled by her conscience and the fear of these terrible consequences. This did not improve the children's present situation.

"But Mrs. Stanhope is so good, she might not blame you so much," said Emmi, hopefully.

Fani shook his head and with a voice half choked replied, "You don't know her, Emmi. Mrs. Stanhope is the greatest benefactress one could imagine, but she cannot bear disobedience. She doesn't like us to upset her household, either,

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and it is quite awful what we have done. We won't get to Rose Hall till the middle of the night and they are probably hunting for us everywhere. What on earth will be my punishment? If Mrs. Stanhope sends Elsli and me home again, I'll have to give up painting for good; then everything is lost." Fani was in deep despair.

By now Emmi had also lost courage and without another word they sat on the bench till it roared the train which was to take them to Rose Hall. The long, silent walk from the station held many terrors for them, and the nearer they came to the house, the more their hearts beat in fearful anticipation. As they entered the courtyard, the large chained watch-dog began to bark, and then immediately grew still as Fani called him by name.

The front door opened and Aunt Clarissa stepped out from the brightly lighted hall. "Is it you? God be praised!" she exclaimed, begging them to come in.

Mrs. Stanhope, who had not gone to bed either, stood in the hall. "Yes, we must all praise God, and you two especially," she said, gazing at them. "So you were in the water after all. Where are the men?"

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Fani and Emmi spoke in confusion that they had met no men; they had just come from the railway station. Mrs. Stanhope shook her head.

“Somebody must go to the fisherman and tell him they are found,” she said curtly. “I’ll leave you now in Aunt Clarissa’s care,” she said, before retiring.

Aunt Clarissa ordered both to go to bed at once. Then she came with a huge pot filled with hot tea and made them drink one cup after another till they both glowed like two heated boilers.

This done, the anxious old nurse sat down by their bedsides to hear all that had happened, and to find out if any damage had been done that might need a doctor.

They told their dreadful experiences but with the assurance that they felt perfectly well now. When their eyes finally closed from weariness, Clarissa went away with a grateful heart.

Next morning, despite the weariness in his limbs, Fani did not want to appear a minute late for breakfast. He therefore jumped up the moment he awoke, then made his toilet. He went into the garden where the birds were singing gaily. They had a lighter heart than he, thought Fani, and might bring him comfort. While he

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was walking to and fro among the trees, he saw a man coming into the courtyard. Fani immediately recognized the fisherman and ran to him. Of course he had come to get his money for their trip. They had not paid him yet. The man stood beside the open door, politely taking off his cap when he saw Fani hastening towards him.

“Yes, I know why you have come,” said Fani, taking out his purse. “Just tell me how much it cost.”

The fisherman turned his cap over and over as if embarrassed. Then he said hesitatingly, “I don’t want to seem insolent, but I don’t know if the young gentleman knows how much such a boat is worth. I couldn’t possibly make another one under eighty marks and I’ll lose at that. But I won’t ask for more.”

Fani felt as if struck by lightning. Of course, the boat must be replaced. But eighty marks! Fani had never seen such a sum of money. He was absolutely speechless.

The fisherman looked at the boy thoughtfully before he quietly said, “Yes, I can understand that the young gentleman doesn’t have such a sum right now. I’ll come again tomorrow after you have talked to your mamma.”

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“No, no,” Fani replied hastily, “I’ll come to you as soon as I have the money, and I promise to come as soon as possible,” he added when he saw how dejected the poor man looked. “I’ll keep my promise, only I can’t tell how soon.”

It seemed as if the fisherman wanted to say something more, but he restrained himself and only heaved a sigh, “Oh, God, my boat is gone and no money to get another,” he murmured to himself.

Fani ran back to the house and to Emmi’s room to see if her boots were still outside. But as they had disappeared, he said in a low voice, “Can you come out, Emmi? I must tell you something.” She also was up and dressed, having been awakened by her worries.

“What is the matter, Fani? Has Mrs. Stanhope already talked to you?” she inquired anxiously.

Fani answered in the negative and then drew Emmi out with him to a little hidden arbor in the garden. Here he told her of the lost boat and the eighty marks damages the man had asked.

“Eighty marks!” Emmi cried perplexed, for she had never in her life owned such a sum. Oh, it’s dreadful! Something more terrible turns up

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every minute. Won't it ever stop? Oh, what shall we do?" she groaned.

"Yes, and the most awful of all will happen in the end!" wailed Fani. "But what shall we do now? We must not ask Mrs. Stanhope for so much money after what we have done already. But where can we find so much? Have you any idea, Emmi? If only I knew someone who could give us eighty marks, for the fisherman must have his money! I could see how much he needed it, but he must never come to Mrs. Stanhope. No, she must never know. Oh, Emmi, can't you think of anybody?"

Emmi, sitting on the bench, was working her brain so hard that her eyes seemed to start from their sockets. A way must be found.

That instant Fred ran towards them, eager to know what had happened the day before. But some of his questions remained unanswered, for they were called to breakfast.

It did not prove a happy meal, as all of the children hung their heads. Not one had a good conscience towards their benefactress, who silently gazed at them.

Aunt Clarissa buttered one piece of bread after another, though a large heap was still

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uneaten. Apparently her thoughts were wandering, too.

Just as Mrs. Stanhope went to leave the room, Lina, the chambermaid, tried to hurry inside. Mrs. Stanhope stood out of her way.

“Excuse me, madam,” said Lina, turning aside a little, “I was in such a hurry because something else has happened. A servant is here from ‘The Crown Prince.’ He was sent here to say that the young man for whom young Oscar ordered a room in the hotel hasn’t been there all night. This morning the shoeblack said he had seen him running straight towards the Rhine. But Master Oscar was seen with him early yesterday afternoon.”

Oscar’s turn had come to be frightened, and he grew white and red in turn, while his eyes wandered about restlessly.

Aunt Clarissa quickly dismissed the maid, saying she herself would see to the matter. Lina might still tell the story of the insects in the desk and make things worse.

Mrs. Stanhope looked very serious. “I don’t understand what it means,” she said, turning to Clarissa. “If Oscar had anything to do with him, I shall pay his expenses.” With this she left the room.

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Emmi flew toward the work-room, and taking up her writing pad, wrote the following letter in great haste:

“Dearest Aunty:

“For heaven’s sake, come to my rescue! Something terrible has happened and I shall never, never hatch up anything for the rest of my whole life. I really intended to obey mamma and not start Fani on anything. He hasn’t even read the book on famous painters I brought along. But as soon as he saw it, he said he’d rather be a painter than anything on earth, but he didn’t know how to bring Mrs. Stanhope round to it. So I found a way. I thought of mamma’s command not to instigate Fani to anything. After all he already knew what he wanted and just didn’t know how to go about it. So I tried to help him. But the most terrible thing happened. I’ll tell you when I see you; it is too long to write about. We lost a boat on the Rhine belonging to a poor fisherman and of course we must pay him for it. You can understand that we can’t ask Mrs. Stanhope for the money after what she has done already. Fani said he’d rather go away and work in the factory at once than ask her. But aunty, you will help us, won’t you? Oh, I beg you a thousand, thousand times not to forsake us in this fearful trouble. The boat costs eighty marks. I know it is a dreadful sum. But I want you to lend it to us, not give it. Please lend it to us. You know I own several valuable things,

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presents from my god-parents. In my division in the writing desk you'll find six silver spoons and a splendid pin-cushion. Also two Easter eggs with beautiful pictures on them, fire-belching dragons, flowers and a sun, moon and stars. You could sell those very well and everything I get from now on I shall sell immediately. I'll also think out ways of making money so I can pay you off. Oh, dear aunty, please help us, for you know that all unhappy people come to you for help. Please write very soon and also tell us to come home. We have been away too long already. I'll be so glad to be home again, where one is safe and has you near to come to when one is in trouble. Oh, if only we could leave tomorrow and be home with you and mamma the same evening! Oh, please write to me tomorrow!

"A thousand greetings from your deeply affectionate niece,
"EMMI."

"P. S. Dear Aunty: I have an idea. I saw a girl in Cologne who was selling roses in the streets. If Mrs. Stanhope would let me have two roses out of each bed, I'd have a basketful and I could walk up and down the road and sell them. I might earn a lot that way. Don't you think so?"

"Once more a thousand greetings from your niece,
"EMMI."

"P. S. Dear Aunty: Just now I had the best idea of all! They put terrible scarecrows in the vineyards here to frighten the birds away. They have red beards and outstretched arms. If you could send me some bright red and yellow

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material I could invent still more fearful looking figures and sell them very dear. That way I might pay you back more than half by the time I get home. By then I'll find still other ways of earning money.

“Renewed greetings from your niece,
“EMMI.”

Fani was awaiting Mrs. Stanhope in the library with a beating heart. As soon as she opened the door, Fani politely rose from his seat. Mrs. Stanhope sat down on the sofa, motioning him to sit down on a chair in front of her.

“Tell me everything that happened yesterday,” she began, “and don't hide anything from me, Fani. Why you went to the river and how you did it. Also whose first idea it was. Be frank and do not hide anything from me, as I can tell at once if you leave anything unsaid. I must see clearly in this matter.”

Fani began at the beginning. He related in detail how much he had liked to draw at home and what plans he and Emmi had made for his future, then how grateful he had been for the drawing lessons Mrs. Stanhope had let him have and how much happier he grew the more he was allowed to learn, and finally how he told Emmi about it and the encouragement she had given him to tell Mrs. Stanhope about his wishes. Fani gave the chief

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point of the narrative quite clearly, namely, his intention of making a drawing for which he might win a prize and his hope to win his benefactress's approval. Emmi had found a way to do it, because she could row so well. Finally came a description of their unfortunate journey, as Emmi had not realized the power of the river waves in comparison with the quiet ones on the lake to which she had been accustomed.

Mrs. Stanhope had listened silently. When Fani was done, she only said, "That is all, Fani; you may go now."

As soon as he left the room, Emmi, who had been waiting eagerly behind a large pillar, met him. "And what is going to happen?" she asked with suspended breath.

"Everything is just as before," replied Fani. "I don't know anything yet."

"Did she scold you dreadfully? Did she say it was really my fault?" inquired Emmi.

"No, no, Mrs. Stanhope never scolds, but she is angry with me. She hardly said a word, and she usually talks to me in such a friendly manner, even when I do something she does not like. Oh, I know that everything is over," wailed Fani.

Emmi heaved a deep sigh, conscious of having herself brought this misfortune about. Three

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days passed more quietly than any since the guests had come. A ban seemed to be on them all, and they hardly talked or laughed or wanted to enjoy themselves. On the morning of the fourth day a thick letter for Mrs. Stanhope arrived from Mrs. Keller, with an enclosure for the children. She expressed her warmest thanks to Mrs. Stanhope for all the pleasures and delights her children had enjoyed on her beautiful property. Then followed many sincere requests to forgive the children the recent dreadful agitations. The mother concluded the letter with the assurance that the children had enjoyed her hospitality long enough, and any time which suited Mrs. Stanhope should be settled upon for their return. The enclosure held a separate letter from the aunt for every child. Emmi had torn hers open first and it had some banknotes in it. Flying out of the room she cried to Fani, "She has saved us, she has saved us! Oh, my aunty is a heavenly angel!" Fani was beaming with joyous surprise. "Take it and run to the fisherman while I read my letter, cried Emmi, holding out the money to the boy. Hidden away in the little arbor she read her letter. After an affectionate beginning she read as follows:

"It is a dreadful shame, dearest child, that

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you all had to spoil those beautiful days, and all because you did not obey properly. Probably your visit can never be repeated. Oscar and you are especially to blame, as papa and mamma told you exactly what not to do. But you were not content till you thought out something to suit yourselves, only obeying their words in the merest details. You can both understand what I mean, and you fully deserve all the terrors and worries you have had to suffer by your actions. I hope you both learn a permanent lesson from it, for just think what misfortunes might have resulted for you both, and quite different ones from what your present ones are! Especially to you, Emmi! Though you didn't tell mamma and me exactly what has happened, we know you can see that you did some wrong. As the boat was lost the end might have been fatal, if God had not especially protected you. Do not forget this in a hurry and pray to Him every day, first thanking Him and then begging Him to protect you from future dangers you again might prepare for yourself. I am sending you the needed money because I don't want Mrs. Stanhope to pay for your exploit, either. Fani showed a fine instinct in being willing to lose everything rather than ask her. As I feel quite sure that the fault was en-

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tirely yours, it is not fair that poor Fani should suffer. But I give you the money with a special request. Please think out no more such expensive schemes in the future, as I might not be able to help you out another time. Also give up all your various plans for making money, which might involve you in still more dreadful difficulties than your last one. Mamma and I can hardly wait to have you all home again."

In her letter to Oscar the aunt, after an affectionate beginning, gave her opinion that Oscar should have been punished more severely for his obstinacy in using the verse she did not approve of, and for interpreting his papa's words to suit himself.

"No letter from the police has reached papa yet," continued the aunt, "but quite another accusation lies against you.

"On the third day after his departure Feklitus appeared at home like a fugitive, without any possessions. He told a gruesome story about you involving him in a dreadful affair from which he could only save himself by immediate flight. That unlucky evening he ran straight to the station, where he caught a night train. He stayed in it till he got home.

"You can see by that, Oscar, that you owe

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Feklitus something. Even if the fate awaiting him was not so dreadful as he imagined, one thing is certain, namely, that your unfortunate enterprise has brought the wrath of his parents down upon you. You can only repair this by relieving Mrs. Bickel of a great anxiety at once. She told me yesterday that she has lost her appetite and can't even sleep because she constantly sees the waiters of the 'Crown Prince' before her, dividing her son's new suits and drawing lots for his expensive leather trunk. These things were left behind when he chose to flee. Go at once to the 'Crown Prince,' pack his clothes carefully, lock the trunk and send it off. Mail the keys separately, so everything will get here in order. In this way you may redeem yourself with the Bickel family, whose wrath is not wholly undeserved."

To Fred, after expressions of hearty sympathy for the loss of his collection, the aunt wrote as follows: "I fear, child, that you are not quite guiltless in this misfortune. I warned you against putting your little creatures in places where Mrs. Stanhope might not want them. I couldn't just tell you exactly where not to put them, but you should have been sensible enough to know that beetles and caterpillars don't belong in desks. You see your greediness has brought it all to pass and you must learn to be more moderate; had you

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only wished to keep the rarest specimens, you could have asked for a couple of boxes. Fani is quite right and I like it in him that he does not want to ask for such heaps of things as twenty boxes at once, when he already enjoys so many benefits every day. Perhaps you can replace one or two of your rare specimens in the future. Let us hope so!"

The letters brought great relief, despite the heavy sighs they evoked.

"How about going home?" asked all three with an equal longing.

"What is to happen to me when Mrs. Stanhope speaks again?" Fani timidly asked himself in secret. "Shall I have to go home and work in the factory?"

Mrs. Stanhope had not talked to him yet in her old manner, and had only looked at him thoughtfully instead.

In Elslie's heart the great anxiety was doubled. If Mrs. Stanhope was angry with Fani, how much more angry would she be as soon as the whole matter should be revealed, as it was bound to be. Probably then Mrs. Stanhope would not want to hear anything more about them.

CHAPTER XVII

THE SEQUEL

A DOOR led from Elсли's bedroom into Aunt Clarissa's chamber. On these days, so busy with manifold cares, the faithful housekeeper always sought her rest quite late, for when the children had gone to bed she still went to Mrs. Stanhope to talk things over and make plans for the morrow. After this Aunt Clarissa still had many household things to attend to, and questions pertaining to the servants, the kitchen and the garden had to be settled. That night it was especially late when Clarissa at last retired to her room. The inmates of the house were wrapped in sleep and the whole house was still. While sitting down to read an evening hymn, Clarissa suddenly heard some startling noises in Elсли's room. Hastening over, she found the child sitting up in bed. Her cheeks were deathly pale and she looked very ill.

As soon as Clarissa entered, Elсли said in a timid voice, "Oh, Aunt Clarissa, I am so sorry to disturb you!"

"But, child, what is the matter?" asked Clarissa, terrified.

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“ Oh, not much,” said Elсли. “ I feel some pain, but I do not want you to worry. I am just dreadfully tired.”

“ Dear child,” said Clarissa, laying an arm around Elсли to support her. “ I am afraid that you are very ill. Have you felt this way for a long time? ”

“ Yes. I have often been a little frightened lately. I have slept very little and I couldn't eat. But it has all been my fault, and I feel so badly, Aunt Clarissa, because I have not told you what I did. I meant to do so long ago, but there was never any time. I am afraid I did wrong in keeping on when nobody knew, and Mrs. Stanhope would probably not have let me.”

In deep astonishment Clarissa looked at Elсли. Was it possible this seemingly innocent child had consciously been doing wrong?

“ Tell me about it, it will relieve you,” she said with kindness. “ But don't exert yourself and talk very slowly.”

The child, obeying, related how she had first become acquainted with the family of the fisherman, then how she had spent her afternoons there, doing all their work and in the end feeling perfectly at home there.

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When Elslie had finished, she looked up at Clarissa in the most supplicating way and asked, "Was I very wicked, Aunt Clarissa?"

The old woman, taking the child's hand in hers, said kindly, "Don't worry, Elslie, it was not wicked, for I know you meant no harm. If you had told me how great their need was, I could have advised you, but I myself kept you from telling. I'll try to explain it all to Mrs. Stanhope and I know everything will be all right."

"But do you think that I'll be allowed to go back and work for them all again?" asked Elslie, frightened.

"You are so ill now that you will probably not be able to go there for quite a while. But do not trouble yourself about them. I promise to help them," Clarissa consoled her. "I never knew that these people were so needy, as the man never complained when he brought the fish. I'll go there and see what can be done for the sick woman. Doesn't that comfort you?"

"Yes," said Elslie slowly, "but there is so much more to do than anybody knows of, and I am sure the mother won't tell you. I couldn't mend much in that short time, and all their clothes

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are torn. There is nothing for the children to wear, and the mother can neither cook nor work yet. The money the father gets is barely enough to feed them. The house even might be taken away from them. They don't beg but they are in terrible trouble. It is with them just as it used to be with us at home."

Elsli sobbed aloud, for the sad experiences of her early life, combined with the misery she had witnessed lately, had gone deeply to her heart.

Clarissa took the sobbing child into her arms and lifted her up so that the bright starlight fell on her face.

"Don't look backwards any more, Elsli," she said kindly. "We must look forward to the future. We must take good care of you first, and then we shall all together help your dear friends as well as your family at home. You see God brought you here to be a support for such as are in dire need, and Nora will be so happy to find you bringing sunshine to others. Come, Elsli, try to sleep now, for you see God needs you to do His work."

Elsli, raising her eyes to the gleaming stars, gradually grew calmer. As soon as Clarissa saw her resting quietly, she went to Mrs. Stanhope and told her the whole pathetic story of the

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dear child; how Elсли, in her unselfishness had been unable to enjoy the luxury around her and, giving herself completely, had overtaxed her strength.

A physician was summoned at once, and everything was done to fight for the little girl's life.

Early next morning Clarissa told the children that Elсли had fallen ill during the night, and at first they could not comprehend it, for Elсли had still played with them the day before. She had been as sympathetic and obliging as ever, never even mentioning her trouble. They all loved the gentle, affectionate Elсли, especially Fani who felt full of pain and sorrow, thinking how heavily he had relied on good, dear Elсли; how often she had taken hard tasks and punishments upon herself to spare him pain! Fani also felt how great her love for him had always been, and how he might even lose her; he knew that no one on earth took such a close interest in him and shared everything with him as his sister did.

Next day Clarissa went to the fisherman's cottage to keep her promise to Elсли. Clarissa told them of the child's illness and promised to send the mother strengthening food, which she so sadly lacked. She would also help them in

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other ways, and do everything she could for Elсли's friends.

When the old woman had gone the family gave way to their grief, for all of them loved Elсли, who had so completely changed the household and had made everybody glad. That this child who had worked for everyone had come from the beautiful Rose Hall remained a miracle. Quite convinced, the father said, "She is an angel from heaven; I said so right away! Let us pray earnestly for her recovery! She is the best friend we ever had."

For a few days the house was cast in gloom, for Elсли was stricken with a high fever and seemed unable to recover. But the excellent care she received soon began to tell and the fever left her. Elсли herself, remembering kind Clarissa's words to her on the first night of her illness, was very anxious to get well. After all, God did work miraculously through His most humble children.

A new, great happiness had also come to the child, which added to her new desire to live. This was the deep affection Mrs. Stanhope was showing her. The woman at last realized the importance to her of the child whom Nora had loved so dearly. She knew she had done very little till

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now to find out the child's true nature, and she resolved to make up to Elсли all she had formerly denied her. As soon as the convalescent was able to sit up in bed Mrs. Stanhope frequently came to see her and talked to her child about the fisherman's family and her own dear ones at home, making many plans to help them.

Thus a new aim for living was awakened in the rich woman's breast as well as in Elсли's. She resolved to share God's gifts freely with such around her as had need of help. A new deep affection grew up between mother and daughter, shown by at first shy, and then more frequent caresses. This united the two children firmly to their kind mother, and Fani shared their happy plans. He was always glad to run to the fisherman's cottage and bring them all gifts from Mrs. Stanhope and Elсли, and, best of all, news of his sister's steady recovery. All Mrs. Stanhope's anger with Fani seemed forgotten, and she spoke as kindly to him as ever.

As soon as the crisis was past, Mrs. Stanhope and Aunt Clarissa told their visitors that their parents were extremely anxious for their return. She hoped they would all meet again another

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year, hereby showing her complete forgiveness for their various misdeeds.

All three were allowed to see Elsli before they left, and thus could take leave with light hearts from all the inmates of Rose Hall.

The children travelled all night, and when the train arrived, their father's carriage already stood at the station. Running towards it, they heard loud cries of joy from Riki, who had been allowed to come to meet them. When, after a short drive, mother and aunt came running out of the house and greeted them with their incomparable love, they half laughed and cried from sheer delight. That evening it seemed impossible to calm the children down, the bliss of being home again, the flood of communications coming from all at once, the thousand questions to be asked, had made them all much excited.

At last they lay again in their accustomed beds and slept soundly after their great experiences. The mother went quietly from bed to bed, sending up fervent prayers of thanks to Him who had kept them all from harm and led them safely back to her arms.

Mrs. Stanhope, after this most agitating summer, had come to a final conclusion in regard to

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Fani, which she might never have reached had everything been peaceful. She had always intended to make him the future steward of the estate, but now she changed her mind.

Several days after the children had gone, and just as Fani was wandering about the garden, picking flowers for Elсли, Mrs. Stanhope called him to her room.

“Sit down by me, Fani,” she said to the boy. “We have something to talk over together. I saw from your unfortunate trip on the Rhine that the greatest wish of your heart is to become a painter. Are you sure it isn't just a sudden whim? Have you wished it for a long time and do you still desire it?”

Fani blushed a deep scarlet. After hesitating a little he answered:

“Yes, it has always been my greatest wish and it has grown since I have learned more about drawing. But I'll never think of it any more, and I promise to do whatever you want me to.”

“I have spoken with your teacher,” continued Mrs. Stanhope. “He says that if your industry is equal to your talent, you may become an able painter, and I am sure that, if your longing is so great, you will show diligence. I have resolved

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to send you to Dusseldorf, as soon as you are old enough, which will be in a year or two.

Fani was speechless with surprise and rapture. When he finally wanted to show his gratitude, bright tears poured from his eyes and he could not speak.

When Mrs. Stanhope saw the usually eloquent boy completely silent, she said to herself, "This time he is in earnest."

"For the present we want you to stay at home and help us nurse Elсли back to health," she said aloud. "You can go and tell her."

This added joy at her brother's splendid prospects made a great change in Elсли, and she improved visibly from day to day.

Mrs. Stanhope had already written to the children's father, sending a considerable sum of money and promising regular help to the little household. This removed a great burden of care from the delighted man, and changed his noisy, unhappy home to one that was happy and prosperous.

The fisherman's family also was looked after and they were enabled to move from their wretched hovel to a new little cottage by the riverside.

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Mrs. Stanhope and Clarissa are happy with their two children, and fully enjoy the time before Fani is leaving for his art studies.

Though only a few leaves are left on the trees, the sun is shining down warmly on the river, where a happy group is seated on the bench beside the Rhine. Elsli, still a little pale, is seated between Mrs. Stanhope and Clarissa, while Fani is too exultant to sit still very long. All their eyes are shining as brightly as the little waves on the majestic stream. Here we leave them, and though winter is drawing near, we know that their hearts will be warm with affection towards each other and high plans for the future.

The news that Fani is to become an artist created unbounded enthusiasm in Buchberg. Oscar and Fred and the triumphant Emmi above everybody, look forward confidently to the time when at the exhibitions of the nearby town pictures will be shown signed with the name, "Fani of Buchberg."

Oscar and the Fink Brothers constantly corresponded with each other, and when they shall have reached man's estate, one will hear of patriotic alliances at which the world will wonder.

Feklitis never talks about his Rhine journey,

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however often his comrades may ask him about it. Whenever they are studying about the Rhineland in school, he turns away his head and purposely does not listen, for he does not want to hear about a country where innocent people are so badly treated.

Nearly the most happy of all concerned are Mrs. Keller and her sister, who have followed the fortunes of everybody in the story with the most intense sympathy and interest. That their own children are safely back is indeed a comfort, but the greatest blessing of all is the thought that they shall never more have to worry about dear Gritli's children.



